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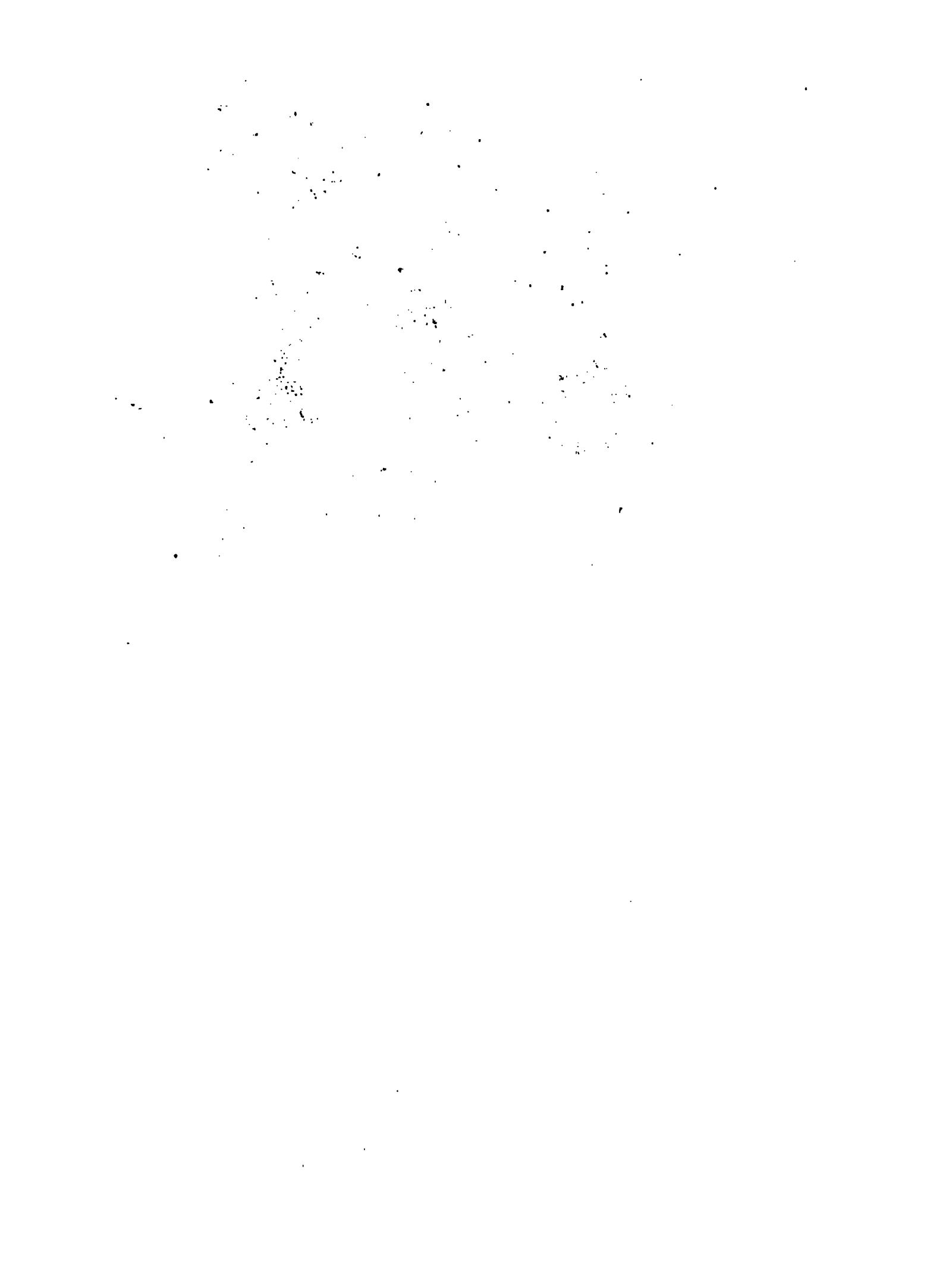




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THE
RIGHT HON. BENJAMIN DISRAELI,
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, K.G.,
AND HIS TIMES.

BY
ALEXANDER CHARLES EWALD, F.S.A.,
AUTHOR OF "SIR ROBERT WALPOLE, A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY;" "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PRINCE
CHARLES STUART;" "REPRESENTATIVE STATESMEN," ETC., ETC.

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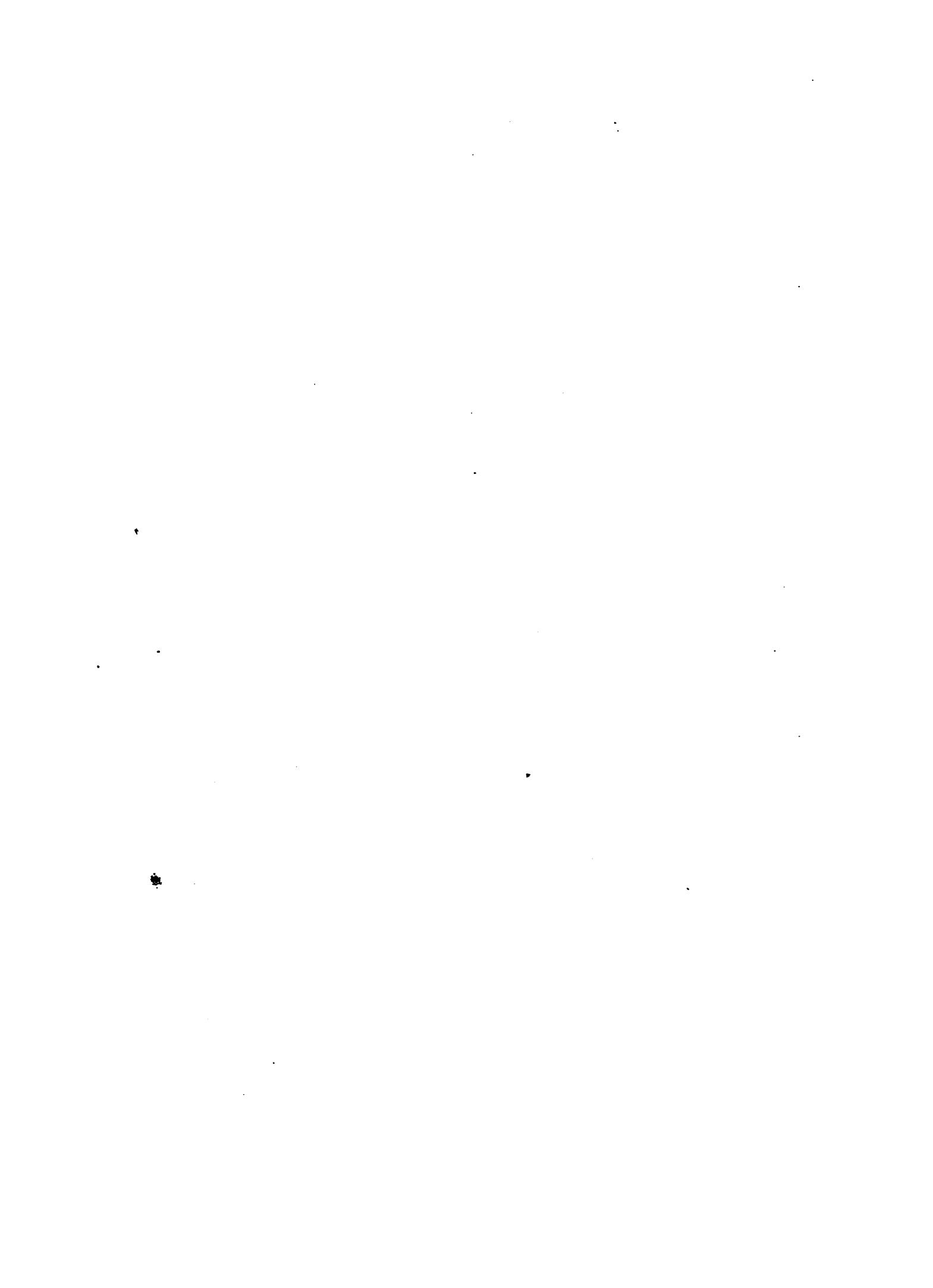
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M A R Q U I S O F S A L I S B U R Y, K. G.





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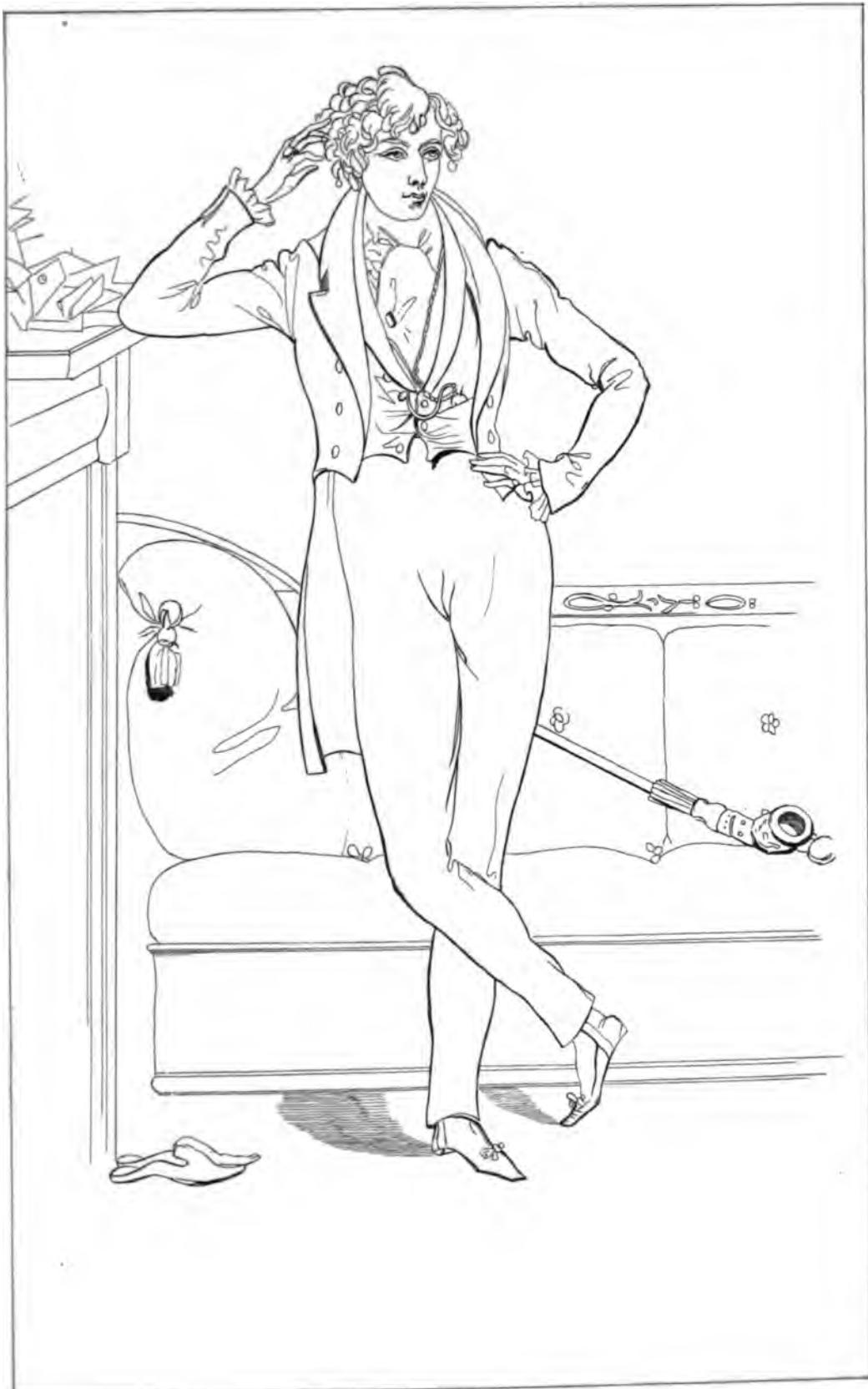


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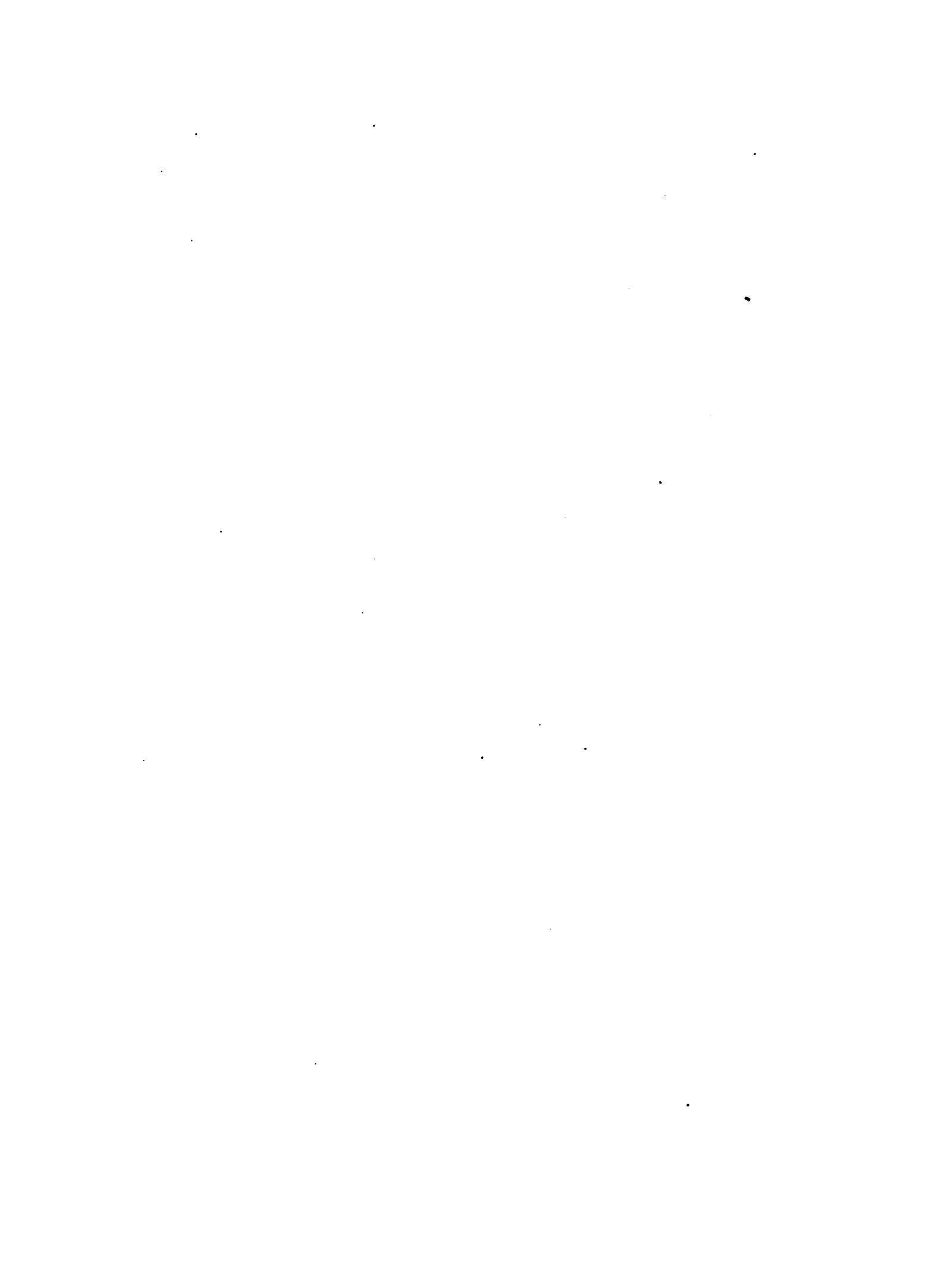






I. Lowenstein Sc

BENJAMIN DISRAELE.
FACSIMILE OF THE SKETCH BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A. IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.



THE
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, K.G.,
AND HIS TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

"DISRAELI THE YOUNGER."

ON the bead-roll of English statesmen the name of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, will only cease to occupy the foremost position when English politics have no further existence. Born to none of those advantages which his predecessors in office enjoyed, he owed the brilliant name he made for himself, and the lofty post he gained with its splendid tenure of power, alone to those rich intellectual gifts which render their possessor independent of the glamour of birth or the favours of fortune. At the outset of his career every obstacle that impediment could devise barred the path of his advancement to the position he subsequently attained, of leader of the English landed interest, and as a potent authority in the councils of Europe. He bore a foreign name; in his veins flowed the blood of a then despised and outcast race; though not poor, his means were too slender to offer any compensation for the disadvantages under which he laboured; he had passed through none of that social preparatory training—boyhood at a public school, manhood at a university—which generally qualifies the English gentleman ambitious of

parliamentary honours; yet ignored, friendless, and the constant butt of all the ridicule and sarcasm that the most venomous malice could inspire, he rose to heights such as Burke had never dreamed of, and swayed a power such as neither Walpole nor the second Pitt had ever exercised. Conscious of the immense talents working within him, quick-sighted as well as far-sighted, a keen judge of character and of the weakness of an enemy's position, with the mordant wit of a Parisian, with all the resources of a complete master of language, and with that exquisite tact which instinctively knows how to make the most of a victory and the least of a defeat, he waited with the patience which is in itself one of the most characteristic signs of great genius, for the moment when his opportunity should come, and the tide, taken at the flood, should bear him on to fortune. In the feverish, harassing struggle of party politics he was always so cool and collected that those who knew not the man said he was indifferent to the conflict around him; whilst the real truth was that his well-balanced judgment was superior to those passions of

the hour which always affect and irritate the shallow and superficial, but leave calm and unruffled the depths of the really great mind. He ran a waiting race; never exhausting himself by futile efforts which might distress and retard him, but keeping his powers well within their grasp, steadily, almost imperceptibly, he drew away from his competitors, until at the supreme moment when called upon by genius, he put forth all his strength and reached the goal a winner, so decided and complete as to leave his victory an event without parallel in the annals of parliamentary triumphs. Criticising Lord Beaconsfield's career from its beginning to its close, we may say that never did ambition seem more hopeless, never was its realization more complete.

In any other profession save that of politics, the success attained by the late Lord Beaconsfield would not have been so singularly remarkable. Men from the most humble surroundings have risen to the serene heights of the bench, have worn the lawn sleeves of the episcopate, have wielded the bâton of the field-marshal, have been created peers for famous achievements. The great prizes of the bar, the church, the queen's services are open to all; and though certain social advantages have, in the different professions, their full value, yet such advantages at the best but give the candidate a good start, and by no means promise him a success positive and assured. Talent, industry, and sound knowledge seldom fail to meet with their deserts in a professional career, whilst factitious combinations only occasionally prosper. With parliamentary life it is very different. To become the head of a great party, to command an obedient and united following, to dominate over the jealousies and spontaneous antipathies of the House of Commons, to be supreme in the council chamber, and to enjoy the confidence both of your sovereign and your country, something more than great abilities have generally been necessary. A lofty name, a

splendid rent-roll, the gifts which captivate what is termed society, have usually been the privileges which surrounded him who held the seals as prime minister. If we look down the list of our English premiers—from Sir Robert Walpole, who was the first to found the office, to its present holder—we shall find that the position and power enjoyed by Lord Beaconsfield are unique. There have been men whom party jealousies have placed at the head of cabinets, and who—mere puppets—were content to act as rival candidates chose to pull the strings; there have been men who have undertaken to form a ministry, simply and solely on account of their illustrious lineage and vast possessions; there have been men raised to supreme power, not because they possessed the confidence of either house of parliament, or because they were beloved by the country, but only because they were the cherished favourites of the sovereign; and again, there have been men who, from comparatively lowly origin, have attained to the position of chief of the cabinet. Yet in none of these instances is there a parallel to the case of Lord Beaconsfield. Walpole maintained his power by judicious distribution of the guineas of the treasury; Newcastle was a simpleton whose dukedom, wealth, and votes in the lower house compensated for his incapacity, and kept him in office; Bute was the pet of the court, and the hated of the people; Addington, Portland, and Perceval were political mediocrities who owed their elevation to the jealousies of the hour. Canning, sneered at as an adventurer, found when he had been appointed to form an administration, that a proud aristocracy declined to obey him. In the political history of Lord Beaconsfield we find, it is true, some of the elements which assisted or hampered his predecessors, but nothing in them sufficiently marked and cohesive as to form a parallel to his exceptional career. In the tactics of parliamentary strategy he was as consummate a master as either Sir Robert Walpole or Sir Robert Peel. Though not unpopular with the people, he cannot be

said to have been, in the fullest acceptation of the word, popular; yet Bute never enjoyed a more cordial and decided support from the court. At no time, however necessary his name might have become to his party, would he have consented—as Portland and Perceval had consented—to have been the chief of a cabinet in which he was not permitted to be dominant and absolute. “When Lord Beaconsfield speaks,” said Prince Bismarck, referring to the distinguished envoy to the Berlin congress, “he does not speak as one of the members of an English cabinet, but as *the cabinet: he is England.*” Like Addington and Canning, the birth of Lord Beaconsfield was not in the minds of the vulgar beyond reproach; yet unlike in their case, the haughtiest aristocracy and the pink of the most prejudiced gentry in Europe gladly enrolled themselves under his banner, and carried out his behests. What, then, we may ask, were the gifts and fascinations with which this extraordinary man was endowed, that he should have succeeded where so brilliant a man as Canning had failed; that he should have enjoyed a reputation on the continent such as Lord Palmerston in his most spirited moments never held; that, sprung from a stock the be-fouled and persecuted of centuries, he should have been the chief favourite in the most exclusive coteries of society, and that he exercised a command over his following which was never disputed except to be instantly repented of? In the following biography we hope to answer these queries.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI was born, it is said,

* The precise year of his birth is uncertain, some giving it as 1805, and others as 1806; but the general impression appears to be that he was born in 1804. In the inscription upon his coffin the date of his birth was omitted, owing to the inability of the executors to discover any authentic record on the point. On the page of the register in the Registry

December 24, 1804,* and, as is well known from the publicity he gave to the fact, and the pride he took in his descent, was sprung from Jewish parents. In the interesting introduction to the works of his father he gives us a sketch of his family history, which will well repay perusal. “My grandfather,” he writes, “who became an English denizen in 1748, was an Italian descendant from one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century, and who found a refuge in the more tolerant territories of the Venetian republic. His ancestors had dropped their Gothic surname on their settlement in the Terra Firma; and grateful to the God of Jacob who had sustained them through unprecedented trials, and guarded them through unheard-of perils, they assumed the name of ‘Disraeli,’ a name never borne before or since by any other family, in order that their race might be for ever recognized. Undisturbed and unmolested, they flourished as merchants for more than two centuries under the protection of the lion of St. Mark, which was but just, as the patron saint of the republic was himself a child of Israel. But towards the middle of the eighteenth century the altered circumstances of England, favourable, as it was then supposed, to commerce and religious liberty, attracted the attention of my great-grandfather to this island, and he resolved that the youngest of his two sons, Benjamin, the ‘son of his right hand,’ should settle in a country where the dynasty seemed at length established, through the recent

Office in East Chapel Street, Mayfair, the name of Lord Beaconsfield is entered as ‘aged 76,’ which makes the year of his birth 1805; but, on the other hand, the following entry from the register of the synagogue in Bevis Marks is too important to be ignored:—

Child's Name.	Father's Name.	Mother's Name.	Surname.	Day in Week of Child's Birth.	Jewish Date.	Christian Era.	Circumcised by	Attested by
Benjamin.	Isaac.	Maria.	D'Israeli.	Friday.	19 Tebet, 5565.	21 December, 1804.	D. A. Lindo, 26 Tebet, 5565.	D. J. De Castro.

failure of Prince Charles Edward, and where public opinion appeared definitely adverse to persecution on matters of creed and conscience.

The Jewish families who were then settled in England were few, though, from their wealth and other circumstances, they were far from unimportant. They were all of them Sephardim, that is to say, children of Israel, who had never quitted the shores of the Midland Ocean until Torquemada had driven them from their pleasant residences and rich estates in Arragon, and Andalusia, and Portugal, to seek greater blessings, even than a clear atmosphere and a glowing sun, amid the marshes of Holland and the fogs of Britain. Most of these families, who held themselves aloof from the Hebrews of northern Europe, then only occasionally stealing into England, as from an inferior caste, and whose synagogue was reserved only for Sephardim,* are now extinct; while the branch of the great family, which, notwithstanding their own sufferings from prejudice, they had the hardihood to look down upon, have achieved an amount of wealth and consideration which the Sephardim, even with the patronage of Mr. Pelham, never could have contemplated. Nevertheless, at the time when my grandfather settled in England, and when Mr. Pelham, who was very favourable to the Jews, was Prime Minister, there might be found, among other Jewish families flourishing in this country, the Villa Reals, who brought wealth to these shores almost as great as their name, though that is the second in Portugal, and who have twice allied themselves with the English aristocracy, the Medinas—the Laras, who were our kinsmen—and the Mendez da Costas, who, I believe, still exist.

* The Jews are divided into two religious communities—the *Askenasim* or orthodox Jews, and the *Sephardim*, or Spanish or Portuguese Jews. Both these communities are distinct over the whole world. In the essentials of Judaism they both agree, but in their ritual they slightly differ. In England, since 1841, a third community has been established, called the Reformed Jews, who deny the authority of the Talmud, and acknowledge only one law—the sacred volume of the Scriptures.

“Whether it were that my grandfather, on his arrival, was not encouraged by those to whom he had a right to look up,—which is often our hard case in the outset of life,—or whether he was alarmed at the unexpected consequences of Mr. Pelham’s favourable disposition to his countrymen in the disgraceful repeal of the Jew Bill, which occurred a very few years after his arrival in this country, I know not; but certainly he appears never to have cordially or intimately mixed with his community. This tendency to alienation was, no doubt, subsequently encouraged by his marriage, which took place in 1765. My grandmother, the beautiful daughter of a family who had suffered much from persecution, had imbibed that dislike for her race which the vain are too apt to adopt when they find that they are born to public contempt. The indignant feeling that should be reserved for the persecutor, in the mortification of their disturbed sensibility, is too often visited on the victim; and the cause of annoyance is recognized not in the ignorant malevolence of the powerful, but in the conscientious conviction of the innocent sufferer. Seventeen years, however, elapsed before my grandfather entered into this union, and during that interval he had not been idle. He was only eighteen when he commenced his career, and when a great responsibility devolved upon him. He was not unequal to it. He was a man of ardent character; sanguine, courageous, speculative, and fortunate; with a temper which no disappointment could disturb, and a brain, amid reverses, full of resource. He made his fortune in the midway of life, and settled near Enfield, where he formed an Italian garden, entertained his friends, played whist with Sir Horace Mann, who was his great acquaintance, and who had known his brother at Venice as a banker, eat macaroni which was dressed by the Venetian consul, sang canzonettas, and notwithstanding a wife who never pardoned him for his name, and a son who disappointed all his plans, and who to the last

to allow his children to undergo that peculiar operation, which is, not to jar upon ears polite, called the "initiatory Abrahamic rite."* From recent investigations made by the curious, we learn that Benjamin Disraeli was circumcised by one Daniel Abar-banel Lindo, a connection of the family, and a Portuguese merchant of high standing.

Shortly after resigning his membership as one of the congregation of Bevis Marks synagogue, Isaac Disraeli, at the instigation, it is alleged, of Samuel Rogers, the poet, gave his consent to his son Benjamin being admitted into the Christian church. The following entry can be seen on the baptismal register of St. Andrew's, Holborn:—

"**ENTRY OF BAPTISM, S^t ANDREW'S, HOLBORN.**
July 31, 1817—Benjamin, s^d to be about twelve years old, son of Isaac and Maria D'Israeli (former described as gentleman), residing at King's R^d—Officiating clergyman, Rev. J. Thimbleby."

The author of the "Curiosities of Literature" was at that time living in King's Road, Bedford Row, in order to be near the library of the British Museum, which he then constantly frequented for the better prosecution of the literary pursuits in which he was engaged. On the death of his father, Isaac Disraeli succeeded to a comfortable fortune, and, being now in good circumstances, removed to a house in the then not unfashionable quarter of Bloomsbury Square. Here he remained during the years 1817-25, when he became the proprietor of a small country seat in Buckinghamshire, "the county of statesmen"† — the Bradenham House so familiar to all who have read the early pam-

* The second of the 613 Precepts which all Jewish children, between six and seven years of age, have to commit to memory, as a thorough knowledge of these is considered to be a key to the Oral Law, commands all Hebrews "To circumcise male children on the eighth day after their birth; for it is written, 'This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised.'" — *Genesis xvii. 10.*

† "The county of Buckinghamshire has supplied this house with a series of statesmen than whom no body of men have more contributed to create the empire, sustain the renown, and cherish the high spirit of the English people. You may smile, remembering only the uninfluential person who now addresses you; but I was thinking of those days when the county of Buckingham gave to the House of Commons Mr. Hampden and the Grenvilles, the elder Pitt and Mr. Burke." — *Speech of Mr. Disraeli on National Representation, June 20, 1848.*

phlets and election addresses of "Disraeli the younger." He died January 19, 1848, after attaining to the ripe old age of eighty-two. On a little hill near Hughenden Manor a column has been erected to his memory, which bears this inscription:—

"In memory of Isaac Disraeli, of Bradenham House, in this county, Esquire, and Honorary D.C.L. of the University of Oxford, who, by his happy genius, diffused amongst the multitude that elevating taste for literature which, before his time, was the privilege only of the learned. This monument was erected by Mary Anne, the wife of his eldest son, the Right Honourable B. Disraeli, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1852, 1858-9, Lord of this Manor, and now for the sixth time Knight of this Shire."

We have entered into some detail with regard to the parentage of the illustrious statesman who is the subject of this political biography, because we have always considered that to the peculiar circumstances of his birth much of the strength and a little of those weaknesses conspicuous in his character and career can be traced. The mental constitution of Benjamin Disraeli was in all its characteristics essentially Hebraic, and only on those few occasions when his acts and aspirations had been tempered and repressed by the influences of a polished Western civilization, did it partake of the English nature. He had that intense individuality peculiar to the Hebrews, which made every question he took up especially his own, and of setting it—witness his teaching as to the Venetian constitution and parliamentary reform—in an entirely new light. He held that the progress of human affairs was almost exclusively influenced by the characters of individual men, and little by the operation of those general laws in which the author of the "History of Civilization" was so firm a believer. "Everywhere," he writes in "Coningsby," "you see the influence of the individual. God made man in His own image; but man is made by newspapers, men of excise officers, poor lawyers, &c., have suc-

been slain? And if Philip had not succeeded? Would Prussia have existed had Frederick not been born? And if Frederick had not been born? What would have been the fate of the Stuarts if Prince Henry had not died, and Charles I., as was intended, had been Archbishop of Canterbury?"

In this teaching we plainly see the influence of his Hebrew origin. At no time had the various forms of unbelief, now so fashionable in intellectual quarters, any attractions for him: he was always, as he frankly admitted, "on the side of the angels." He never doubted the reality of the Jewish theocracy; he was a firm believer in the divinity of the dispensation which succeeded it. The most bigoted Jew could not have been more impressed with the conviction that "the world had from time to time been under the immediate and direct government of the Supreme Being, holding personal communication with His earthly representatives, and investing them with power to control the march of events and to mould the destinies of mankind." Like the prophets of old he believed he was under the especial protection of the Most High, and that it was his mission to regenerate the condition of his country. With the intense egotism and self-reliance of the Hebrew, he believed in himself and in the superiority of the race from which he was sprung. Unlike many men of his own nationality, who, when they have attained to fame, carefully shun all allusions to their origin, Benjamin Disraeli gave every prominence to the fact. It was his belief in his race that made him believe in himself; it was because he could lay claims to a descent which made the pedigree of the proudest Norman baron but a creation of yesterday, that rendered him superior to all feelings of social inferiority, and caused him to regard his position as the political leader of the English gentry as one which he was fully entitled to hold. He who led an exclusive order must himself belong to an exclusive order. A man who was of the same family

to which it had pleased the Son of God, in His infinite condescension, to attach Himself, had no reason to be ashamed of his birth, or to yield precedence to the haughtiest English peer.* The Jews only, according to Benjamin Disraeli, can mark out a lineage which, in its original history, is without a parallel. Speaking through the fictitious Sidonia (supposed to be a portrait of himself, and the expounder of his own views) in his novel of "Coningsby," he thus eloquently discourses upon his favourite topic:—"Sidonia was well aware that in the five great varieties into which physiology has divided the human species—to wit, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malayan, the American, the Ethiopian—the Arabian tribes rank in the first and superior class, together, among others, with the Saxon and the Greek. This fact alone is a source of great pride and satisfaction to the animal Man. But Sidonia and his brethren could claim a distinction which the Saxon and the Greek, and the rest of the Caucasian nations, have forfeited. The Hebrew is an unmixed race. Doubtless, among the tribes who inhabit the bosom of the Desert, progenitors alike of the Mosaic and the Mohammedan Arabs, blood may be found as pure as that of the descendants of the Scheik Abraham. But the Mosaic Arabs are the most ancient, if not the only, unmixed blood that dwells in cities. "An

* It was surely from no feeling of false shame as to his name and origin that prompted him to insert the following clause in his will. He had no desire, like many a modern Jew, who hopes by calling himself Howard or Cholmondeley, or Buckingham de Bohun, to hide his nationality, that the name of Disraeli should be lost in that of Beaconsfield:—"Provided always, and I hereby expressly declare it as my wish, although I abstain from attaching any penalty to the non-performance of this direction, that every person who under this my will shall become entitled as tenant for life or as tenant in tail male to the actual possession, or to the receipt of the rents and profits of the said premises (the manor of Hughenden) hereinbefore devised in strict settlement, and who shall not then use and bear the surname of Disraeli, shall within one year after he or she shall become so entitled; and also that every person whom any woman so becoming entitled shall marry, shall within one year after such woman shall so become entitled or shall marry, whichever of such events shall last happen (unless in the said respective cases any such person shall be prevented by death), take upon himself or herself, and use in all deeds and writings which he or she shall sign, and upon occasions the surname of Disraeli only, and not together with his or her own family surname."

unmixed race of a first-rate organization are the aristocracy of Nature. Such excellence is a positive fact; not an imagination, a ceremony, coined by poets, blazoned by cozening heralds, but perceptible in its physical advantages, and in the vigour of its unsullied idiosyncrasy. In his comprehensive travels, Sidonia had visited and examined the Hebrew communities of the world. He had found, in general, the lower orders debased, the superior immersed in sordid pursuits; but he perceived that the intellectual development was not impaired. This gave him hope. He was persuaded that organization would outlive persecution. When he reflected on what they had endured, it was only marvellous that the race had not disappeared. They had defied exile, massacre, spoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain; they had defied Time. For nearly 3000 years, according to Archbishop Usher, they have been dispersed over the globe. To the unpolluted current of their Caucasian structure, and to the segregating genius of their great Lawgiver, Sidonia ascribed the fact that they had not been long ago absorbed among those mixed races, who presume to persecute them, but who periodically wear away and disappear, while their victims still flourish in all the primeval vigour of the pure Asian breed."

We can remember the wit and humour with which this theory of the "Asian mystery" was received. Yet the laugh has not been exactly on our side. The apostle has proved the truth of his own teaching in his own person by a success which has never before fallen to the lot of a statesman in this country, whilst his theory is on all sides being most fully exemplified. Everywhere the Jew faces his fellow man, and he not only works his way to the front, but often stands a full head and shoulders above the rest of the crowd. Admitted, as it were, but yesterday to the bar, he is in the first rank as counsel: second to none in eloquence, in the lore of jurisprudence, and in the skill of the consummate advocate. The realms of

finance have always been his especial dominion; but never has he occupied so powerful a position as at the present day. He holds empires in pawn, and, by a wish to realize his possessions, could reduce half a continent to bankruptcy. His civil disabilities removed, he becomes a legislator distinguished by his ready gift of debate, or a magistrate conspicuous for his tact and common sense. Music and song and the drama have been so eminently the monopoly of the Hebrew race, that no one is surprised at a great composer or a great actress or a *prima donna* of European celebrity being of Jewish descent. In art, in science, in literature, the despised Hebrew is again among the most gifted in his profession. Whatever department is open to him, his success in it is so remarkable as to make him one of the conspicuous. When the field of his intellect was limited to medicine and finance, he rose till he could rise no higher; and now that the world closes none of its avenues at his approach, the talents which made him attain distinction, when under persecution, render the career he selects in this age of his toleration seldom a failure.

Nor is the Hebrew race deficient in other qualities which are prominently brought out in the career of the late Earl of Beaconsfield. From the earliest times the diplomacy of statesmanship has been the favourite exercise of the cultivated Jew. Facts fully support this assertion. The counsellor to the Saracen king of Granada was Samuel Levi, a Jewish rabbi. The prime minister of Alphonso VIII. was one named Joseph, a Jew. The ambassador from Charlemagne to Haroun Alraschid was Isaac, a Jew. The chief minister of Louis le Débonnaire was Zedekiah, a Jew. Don Isaac Abarbanel and Manasseh Ben Israel, world-wide politicians in their day, were also Jews. Again, glancing at the statesmen of modern times—at Mendizabel and Castelar in Spain; at Clemieux, Simon, Fould, and Gambetta in France; at Assur in Holland; at Daniel Manin and Artom in Italy; at Jacoby and others in Germany—we find them all men

of Hebrew lineage. It is not, therefore, surprising that, with these examples confronting him, the study of politics should have exercised a powerful fascination over the mind of Benjamin Disraeli. He had all the gifts—many of them in a marked degree, the characteristic of the Hebrew mind—calculated to lead a man on to success in parliamentary life. He was original, and stamped his originality upon all that he did, and in the end his views, no matter the opposition they had at first encountered, were generally accepted. When he entered parliament, he attached himself to neither party; he never had any sympathy with Whiggism; he did not represent Tory traditions as they were then understood; he was never a Radical nor a Peelite. He was throughout his career essentially himself; he made his own party, he made his own position, and he restored and reanimated an extinct creed. He saw instinctively the course the Tory party should adopt if it ever wished to regain its old ascendancy in the country; and he watched and waited; then taught and brought into unity a scattered following, until the end he set before him had been attained, and the doctrines he advanced had been fully received. Like his favourite hero, Bolingbroke, he settled the confused and discordant materials of English faction, and reduced them into a clear and systematic order.

"There are few positions less inspiriting than that of the leader of a discomfited party," writes Mr. Disraeli, after praising the dignified conduct of Lord John Russell at a time when the Whigs were in a forlorn minority. "The labours and anxieties of a minister or of his rival on the contested threshold of office may be alleviated by the exercise or sustained by the anticipation of power; both are surrounded by eager, anxious, excited, perhaps enthusiastic adherents. There is sympathy, appreciation, prompt counsel, profuse assistance. But he who in the parliamentary field watches over the fortunes of routed troops, must be prepared to sit often alone. Few care to

share the labour which is doomed to be fruitless, and none are eager to diminish the responsibility of him whose course, however adroit, must necessarily be ineffectual. Nor can a man of sensibility in such a post easily obviate these discouragements. It is ungracious to appeal to the grey-headed to toil for a harvest which they may probably never reap, and scarcely less painful to call upon glittering youth to sacrifice its rosy hours for a result as remote as the experience in which it does not believe. Adversity is necessarily not a sanguine season, and in this respect a political party is no exception to all other human combinations. In doors and out of doors a disheartened opposition will be querulous and captious. A discouraged multitude have no future; too depressed to indulge in a large and often hopeful horizon of contemplation, they busy themselves in peevish detail, and by a natural train of sentiment associate their own conviction of ill-luck, incapacity, and failure, with the most responsible member of their confederation: while all this time inexorable duty demands, or rather that honour which is the soul of public life, that he should be as vigilant, as laborious, should exercise as complete a control over his intelligence and temper, should be as prompt to represent their principles in debate, and as patient and as easy of access in private conference, should be as active and as thoughtful, as if he were sustained by all that encourages exertion—the approbation of the good and the applause of the wise."

When the writer penned these lines, can we doubt but that he was drawing upon his own reminiscences when he was himself the head of a discomfited and disorganized party, and essaying all his arts to cheer it on to union and to victory? And throughout that terrible uphill struggle, how Hebraic were his tenacity of perseverance, his singleness of purpose, his apparent insensibility to the most malignant opposition, his splendid patience, his Heine-like wit which seldom shot its barbed arrows with-

out effect, his discipline, his dexterity, his strategy, and the power which dominates over all prejudices, and not only makes itself felt but makes itself indispensable! Against the apparently insurmountable obstacles which Mr. Disraeli during the earlier years of his parliamentary career had to encounter, the English genius—cold yet impatient, brave yet sensitive, fearing ridicule, with no eye for the unravelling of complications, lacking the instincts of generalship, easily wounded, easily depressed—would have retired a hundred times in despair, and have abandoned the conflict. It wanted the man full of self-reliance, blunted to external reproaches by the consciousness of intellectual superiority, accustomed to difficulties and opposition as the scion of a persecuted house, with the hereditary tact and disciplined self-control born of oppression long patiently endured; it wanted the diplomatic instincts, the clear, hard judgment never intoxicated by victory, never confused by defeat; it wanted, in fine, the man of infinite resources, and these were found in ample measure in Benjamin Disraeli, the Hebrew. It is but a poor set off against these brilliant Oriental gifts, to twit their possessor for those little weaknesses which were as much the consequence of his Jewish descent as were the vitality of his intellect and the tenacity of his purpose—his avowed love for pomp and splendour, his thirsting after the marvellous, his Chatham-like taste for theatrical effect, his somewhat ignoble appreciation of the refinements of civilization, his “Hounds-ditch dreams” of lofty rank, costly finery, blazing jewels, and the gorgeous generally. Whatever were his faults, he stands out against the canvas of history as one of the most brilliant individualities that has ever impassioned political warfare, and led and controlled the government of a country.

Of the earlier years of Benjamin Disraeli little is known, and since even the slight information we possess does not bear upon his political conduct, we shall content ourselves with but briefly alluding to the events

that occurred during the interval between his birth and his first appearance in the House of Commons. It may gratify the malevolence of the divine disappointed in not obtaining the preferment he expected, of the suppliant gentleman of the press whose “claims on the party” have been ignored, of the mercenaries of the “vagabond population” of the Lower House *et hoc genus omne*, to vent their spite upon the eminent statesman who has lately passed from us, by distorting facts and manipulating statements so as to render the object of their hate—a hate the keener since it failed to wound—ridiculous and contemptible; but good taste, if no warmer feeling, bids us remember the kindly remark of Archbishop Tillotson, “If we can say no good of a man let us be silent, unless it becomes absolutely necessary for us to speak the evil.” In dealing with the political conduct of a public man we have no concern here with private matters. We know that Mr. Disraeli was not sent to a public school, and that he was not entered at either of our universities; he is, however, not the only English statesman who has been bereft of these early advantages. In the hot days of youth he no doubt led the ordinary life of the gallant, whose passions are stronger than his principles; let malice make the most of it; also let him who is without sin cast the first stone. He contracted a few debts, and the fact has been diligently raked up, and spitefully commented upon. Is he the only youthful politician who has been dunned? Were Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, Mirabeau, always solvent?

Still, about this early period of his history much exaggeration has been indulged in. When Lord Eldon, who was the son of a coal agent, was first promoted to the serene heights of the woolsack, his enemies loved to allude to him as the offspring of a coal heaver; he being no more the son of a coal heaver than is the son of a brewer the son of a publican. In the same malignant fashion the enemies of Benjamin Disraeli have loved to draw

attention to the various disadvantages under which he, at the commencement of his political career, is alleged to have so painfully laboured. As a plain matter of fact he was far from having been severely handicapped in an ordinary race for honour and promotion. He was not the first man of Jewish origin who had obtained a seat in the House of Commons, and therefore the fact of his being of alien birth, and of having once been attached to an alien creed, was not in itself an obstacle that others before him had not surmounted. Had he not, to his honour be it said, brought his birth so prominently forward on every occasion ; had he attached himself to the Radical party ; had he prided himself upon being sprung from the people ; had he become the chief even of a Radical cabinet—if he had done these things, it is probable that his Hebrew descent would scarcely have drawn forth a sneer, though his career, eminently distinguished of course as it would have been, would yet have been deprived of those features which rendered it so unique and so brilliant. Thiers the son of the locksmith, Gambetta the son of the clothier, Abraham Lincoln the labouring man, have all sprung from a lower social level than Mr. Disraeli, yet malice has been fairly silent as to their humble origin ; for it is a graceful compliment to the order of things that under a republican form of government a son of the people should aspire after, and should attain to, its highest post. It is not a matter for supreme surprise that Mr. Disraeli should have become a prominent member of parliament, or should have developed into a prime minister ; but it is a marvellous tribute to his genius that he, of foreign blood and once an acreless man, should have been the accepted and the absolute leader of the English gentry and the English aristocracy. The Napoleons, charmed they never so wisely, were powerless to gain over the Faubourg St. Germain.

Much, too, has been said by the enemies of Mr. Disraeli of the social slights and

pecuniary distresses which were his lot at the outset of his career. Here, again, malice has usurped the place of truth. Mr. Isaac Disraeli was a well-known man of letters, in the enjoyment of excellent private means, moving in the best society, and acquainted with most of the celebrities of his day. His son, at a time when many young men were busy working for their degrees at the universities, was one of the most conspicuous dandies of the day, and the pet of several dames of the highest fashion. His name was constantly to be met with in the assemblies of the great ; and the "intelligent foreigner" who visited our shores regarded him as so much of a personage as to describe with no little elaboration both his appearance and conversation. Had Mr. Disraeli come upon the London world some thirty years before he did, he was just the man for the second Pitt to have taken by the hand and to have ushered him, through the convenient system of a nomination borough, into the House of Commons. So much for his having been a "pariah," a "pauper," a "needy adventurer," a miserable snob, who "drew pictures, from his imagination and not from his experience," of a society into which he had never entered ! Nor was he ever "a copying clerk" in a lawyer's office. At an early age he had been articled—as many a young man of good birth is at the present day articled—to a respectable firm of solicitors ; but finding the law not to his taste, he soon quitted legal practices for the calling for which he felt himself more especially suited.*

We are told that men in whom the

* A correspondent writes to the *Times*, April 29, 1881 :—"I have just ferreted out the only official record of the entry of Mr. Disraeli into public life, and it may be a fitting pendant to the account of his quitting it. It is his 'apprenticeship indenture' (recorded No. 2,958 of the old King's Bench of 1821) in the usual manner, with an affidavit of the execution. The date is the 10th of November, 1821, between Isaac D'Israeli, Esquire, of Bloomsbury Square, Benjamin D'Israeli, his son, and William Stevens, solicitor, of Frederick Place (Swain, Stevens, & Co.), whereby the son was placed for five years as clerk to learn, &c., in the usual form, to become an attorney of the Court of King's Bench and a solicitor of the Court of Chancery.' The deed was executed by all three parties, verified by the usual affidavit, filed on the 18th of November, and enrolled."

workings of genius are strong, predict the future they are one day to command. The child we know is father of the man, and the subjects which gravely interest his youth often compel him on to that afterstudy which secures fame for his ripening years. It is said that Petrarch, when a boy, was ever beating a retreat to silent haunts in order to scribble sonnets to certain of his gentler playmates. The early days of Sir Joshua Reynolds were spent, much to his father's disapproval, in sketching the faces of the different visitors who called at the house. Bacon, when scarcely out of the nursery, was so noted for thoughtful observation, that Queen Elizabeth nicknamed him "the young Lord Keeper." Some of the finest passages of Racine were composed when the future poet was but a pupil at Port Royal. Milton has sung to us in memorable verse what were his aspirations as a lad:—

When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing: all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good; myself I thought
Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
All righteous things.

Similar indications of decided predilection young Disraeli was now to exhibit. Literature, especially the literature which dealt with political combinations and party intrigues, was his favourite study. "Trained from early childhood by learned men, who did not share the passions and prejudices of our political and social life," he writes, "I imbibed on some subjects conclusions different from those which generally prevail, and especially with reference to our own country. How an oligarchy had been substituted for a kingdom, and a narrow-minded and bigoted fanaticism flourished in the name of religious liberty, were problems long to me insoluble, but which early interested me. But what most attracted my musing, even as a boy, were the elements of our political parties, and the strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become

odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular." With brilliant wit, but with the flippancy of audacious youth, he embodied certain of these views in his well-known novel, "Vivian Grey," which appeared in 1826, and which took the literary, political, and fashionable world by storm. Its humorous gallery of portraits of famous contemporaries, sketched with all the epigram of Parisian wit, its daring individuality, its cynical sentiments, its thinly-veiled details of a scandal-loving age, made it not only the rage of the season, but of several seasons. It ran through numerous editions, and is even now, though its pages refer to a forgotten past, one of the best read of the author's productions. "Vivian Grey," wrote Mr. Disraeli in 1870, "is essentially a puerile work, but it has baffled even the efforts of its creator to suppress it. Its fate has been strange, and not the least remarkable thing is, that forty-four years after its first publication, I must ask the indulgence of the reader for its continued and inevitable re-appearance." It has amused the peculiar malice of Mr. Disraeli's enemies to carefully collate the most cynical and audacious passages in "Vivian Grey" with certain passages in the author's private and political life, and to prove that the witty, flippant romance is not so much a novel as an autobiography. Those who like to manufacture their premises, and then to jump to their conclusions, may perhaps consider such warped and strained comparisons a profitable study; to us they only appear as another instance of the hatred, malice, and all-uncharitableness which the career of Mr. Disraeli seems to have excited in certain splenetic and disappointed minds. One quotation we take from the book, which may perhaps illustrate the ambition and promptings of its author; at all events, if it has no bearing upon his future career, the illustration is not impertinent. "It was one of the first principles of Mr. Vivian Grey," we read, "that everything was possible. Men did fail in life, to be sure, and, after all,

very little was done by the generality; but still all these failures, and all this inefficiency, might be traced to a want of physical and mental courage. Now Vivian Grey was conscious that there was at least one person in the world who was no craven either in body or mind, and so had long come to the comfortable conclusion that it was impossible that his career could be anything but the most brilliant."

The popularity of the novel naturally led its author to other literary enterprises. In quick succession there proceeded from his pen "The Voyage of Captain Popanilla," a satire on society and politics, written in imitation of Swift, and full of humour and biting sarcasm; "The Young Duke," the feeblest of his romances, and which provoked his father to cry out when told of the book, "Dukes, sir! what does my son know about dukes? he never saw one in his life!" "Alroy," a tale of the twelfth century; and "Contarini Fleming," a physiological romance purporting to be a study of the development and formation of the poetic character. Benjamin Disraeli was now, though six-and-twenty, a well known man of letters, and one of the "curled darlings" in the circles presided over by Lady Blessington and the handsome dandy, Count D'Orsay. An American traveller, who ill repaid the hospitalities he received, by his offensive comments upon English society, thus describes the young fashionable author:—"Disraeli," he writes, "has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. His eye is black as Erebus, and has the most mocking, lying-in-wait sort of expression conceivable. His mouth is alive with a kind of working and impatient nervousness, and when he has burst forth, as he does constantly, with a perfectly successful cataract of expression, it assumes a curl of triumphant scorn that would be worthy a Mephistopheles. A thick mass of jet-black ringlets falls over his left cheek almost to the collarless stock, while on the right temple it is parted and put away with the

smooth carefulness of a girl's. Patent leather pumps, a white stick with black cord and tassel, and a quantity of chains about his neck and pockets, served to make him a conspicuous object." The biographer of Lady Blessington writes of him in a more complimentary strain. "Many years ago, upwards of twenty," he says, "I frequently met Mr. Disraeli in Seaford Place. It needed no ghost from the grave to predicate even then his success in public life. Though in general society he was usually silent and reserved, he was closely observant. It required generally a subject of more than common interest to produce the fitting degree of enthusiasm to stimulate him into the exercise of his marvellous powers of conversation. When duly excited, however, his command of language was truly wonderful, his power of sarcasm unsurpassed; the readiness of his wit, the quickness of his perception, the grasp of his mind, that enabled him to seize all the points of any subject under discussion, persons would only call in question who had never been in his company at the period I refer to." Indeed all who crossed his path at this time predicted for "D'Israeli the younger," as he preferred to call himself and to spell his name, a brilliant future.

In the earlier part of the year 1829, Benjamin Disraeli started on an extensive tour of eastern travel, halting for some time in Constantinople, then wandering through Egypt and Syria, and finally making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The reminiscences of this tour are visible, as all readers of his romances are aware, in his tale of "Alroy," which he published shortly after his return home, and in his later and far more finished novel, "Tancred." In common with most authors, Mr. Disraeli broke out at one time of his life into verse, and like most authors whose poetry has failed to be appreciated, he considered his poetical effusions as among his highest literary efforts. The first portion of the much-derided "Revolutionary Epic" was given to

the world in 1834; though the sequel was not published till 1864, it was, however, begun in 1830. "It was on the plains of Troy," writes Mr. Disraeli in his preface to his epic, which was henceforth, in his own estimation, to take rank with the "Iliad," the "Æneid," the "Divine Comedy," and "Paradise Lost"—"It was on the plains of Troy that I first conceived the idea of the work. Wandering over that illustrious scene, surrounded by the tombs of heroes and by the confluence of poetic streams, my musing thoughts clustered round the memory of that immortal song to which all creeds and countries alike respond, which has vanquished chance and defied time. Deeming myself, perhaps too rashly in that excited hour, a poet, I cursed the destiny that had placed me in an age that boasted of being anti-poetical. And while my fancy thus struggled with my reason, it flashed across my mind, like the lightning that was then playing over Ida, that in those great poems which rise, the pyramids of poetic art, amid the falling and fading splendour of less creations, the poet hath ever embodied the spirit of his time. Thus, the most heroic incident of an heroic age produced in the 'Iliad' an heroic epick; thus, the consolidation of the most superb of empires produced in the 'Æneid' a poetical epick; the revival of learning and the birth of vernacular genius presented us in the 'Divine Comedy' with a national epick; and the Reformation and its consequences called from the rapt lyre of Milton a religious epick. And the spirit of my time, shall it be uncelebrated? Standing upon Asia and gazing upon Europe, with the broad Hellespont between us, and the shadow of night descending on the mountains, these mighty continents appeared to me, as it were, the rival principles of government that at present contested for the mastery of the world. 'What!' I exclaimed, 'is the revolution of France a less important event than the siege of Troy? Is Napoleon a less interesting character than Achilles? For me remains the Revolutionary Epick.'"

Our admiration of Mr. Disraeli's literary

merits need not necessarily cloud our judgment, or render us blind to common sense. It must, therefore, candidly be admitted that the "Revolutionary Epic" is a complete failure: it is turgid, bombastic, and has scarcely a line or thought deserving of the name of poetry.

A grievous disappointment was now to turn Benjamin Disraeli's thoughts towards the arena in which he was for nearly half a century to exercise an influence which will not cease with his death. He had published "Contarini Fleming" anonymously, in order to test the appreciative faculty of the public, and it had fallen comparatively dead from the press. "Having written it with deep thought and feeling," he said, "I was naturally discouraged from further effort." Soured, and in something like a pet, he resolved to abandon literature and betake himself to the profession of politics. How accidental are often the circumstances which decide the whole future of a life, and lead men on to a greatness they might not otherwise have achieved! Had Handel followed the study of civil law, as had been his first intention, would music ever have possessed his wondrous oratorios? Had Smeaton agreed to be articled to an attorney, would he have been handed down to posterity as one of the greatest of engineers? Had the mill, in which Rembrandt was reared, been lighted from the side instead of from the top, would he have become known as the master of that peculiar light and shade which has made his name immortal? Had Rousseau ever taken his seat at his father's cobbler's stall, would literature have been enriched by the "Confessions" and "Emile?" Had Hume been engaged in commerce, as his father desired, would he have become famous as a historian? Had Turner accepted the terms of a barber's apprentice, would critics now worship him as the Shakspeare of English landscape painters? And had Benjamin Disraeli not been disappointed by the temporary failure of his physiological romance, who knows whether he might not have sworn absolute fealty to

literature, instead of dividing his homage, and thus have passed to his rest unknown to political fame?

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

The hour he had chosen to carry out his new resolve was a momentous one in the fortunes of English politics. The administration of the Duke of Wellington had proved itself incapable of rightly interpreting the feeling of the country. At its head was the most splendid general of his day, yet who in his civil capacity was singularly short-sighted and opinionative. The Duke of Wellington was not a statesman. The very qualities which had made him a brilliant soldier, the rapidity with which he arrived at his conclusions, the abject obedience he had been in the habit of enforcing, his belief alone in the aristocratic influence—all interfered with the principles of true statecraft, and caused him to maintain views which were almost always adverse to the spirit of progress. Then when pressure was put upon him, he became "open to conviction," wished "the thing to be settled one way or another," and ended by discovering it to be his duty to abandon what he had upheld, or to pass what he had denounced. "The Duke of Wellington," writes the author of "*Coningsby*" in one of his frequent acute political reflections scattered throughout the pages of the novel, "has ever been the votary of circumstances. He cares little for causes. He watches events rather than seeks to produce them. It is a characteristic of the military mind. Rapid combinations, the result of a quick, vigilant, and comprehensive glance, are generally triumphant in the field: but in civil affairs, where results are not immediate; in diplomacy and in the management of deliberative assemblies, where there is much intervening time and many counteracting causes, this velocity of decision, this fitful and precipitate action, are often productive of considerable embarrassment, and sometimes of terrible discomfiture.

It is remarkable that men celebrated for military prudence are often found to be headstrong statesmen. In civil life a great general is frequently and strangely the creature of impulse; influenced in his political movements by the last snatch of information, and often the creature of the last aide-de-camp who has his ear."

The emancipation of the Catholics had not tended, as his Grace had imagined, to strengthen the position of his government. The Papists had been relieved from their disabilities by the cordial co-operation of the Whigs with the duke; but as soon as the measure which had instituted the union passed into law, the alliance between the two parties gradually dissevered itself. The Wellington Cabinet thus stood alone. The emancipation of the Catholics had alienated the Tories; the quarrel between the duke and Mr. Huskisson had alienated the Canningites; whilst the policy of the government, in opposing itself to such measures as would lead to the mitigation of the commercial and agricultural distress then prevalent, rendered it unpopular with the middle classes. In short, the conduct of the ministry met the usual fate of inconsistency. "It is a Tory government with a Whig policy," said the clergy and gentry, mindful of the Emancipation Act, "and no dependence can be placed on it." "In spite of its one liberal measure, it is still a high Tory administration," said the Whig and the manufacturing interest, anxious about parliamentary reform, the repeal of the corn laws, and the extension of the currency. "and it is idle to expect its assistance in our efforts." And now, whilst affairs were in this condition—the Cabinet weak, but obstinate; the people irritated, yet not aggressive—our fourth George died, and his brother, the sailor king, ascended the throne. As a matter of course, parliament was dissolved, and the Houses summoned to meet in the beginning of November.

The elections took place under the influence of an excitement hostile to

the Eldonite Toryism then in vogue. Across the channel, Frenchmen, wearied by the tyranny and incapacity of priestly Bourbonism, had dethroned their tenth Charles, and Louis Philippe reigned in his stead. The sympathy of insurrection spread to other lands. Belgium rose up against the authority of Holland, and created herself into an independent kingdom. In Warsaw the Poles had broken out into open revolt against the government of the Grand Duke Constantine, and were fighting, with all the patriotism of their race, for freedom from Tartar rule. Brunswick had expelled her duke, and Saxony was agitating for a new constitution. The independence of Greece had been acknowledged by Turkey. Nothing is more infectious than a revolt against despotism, and the efforts of Europe to free herself from the fetters of arbitrary government soon found a ready response in the hearts of the English people. Parliamentary reform was the cry throughout the country, and its advocates discovered themselves almost everywhere at the head of the poll. To such reform the duke was obstinately opposed. He had publicly declared that he was "not only not prepared to bring forward any measure of this nature, but that he would at once assert that so far as he was concerned, so long as he held any station in the government of the country, he should always feel it his duty to resist such measures when proposed by others." This statement sounded the knell of his overthrow. He, at one time the most popular man in England, was now the hated of the country, of the city, and of the press. He had to face an angry majority in parliament, and the result was easily foreseen. When the question of the Civil List for the new reign came before the House of Commons, it was moved that the subject be referred to a select committee. The motion was opposed by the government, but carried by a majority of twenty-nine. On the same day a proposition for parliamentary reform was to be brought to a division, and as the ministers expected a

defeat, they at once resigned, and Earl Grey, a Whig peer of powerful connections, and who had long been interested in the amendment of our representative system, was authorized to form a new administration. We know what followed. A reform bill was introduced, which passed the Commons, but which was rejected by the Lords. Earl Grey went to the palace, and placed two alternatives before the king—the resignation of the cabinet, or the creation of peers sufficient to form a majority in the upper house. His majesty preferred the resignation of the ministers. The Duke of Wellington was summoned to form a cabinet, and to propose a new reform bill. The country, however, declined to place any confidence in the duke; she was in one of her most feminine moods: she not only wanted her own will, but she would not rest content until she had her own will in her own way. With no uncertain voice she declared that Earl Grey should be restored to power, and that no reform bill which was not the measure of his cabinet should meet with her approval. The Duke of Wellington, who had failed to obtain the assistance of Sir Robert Peel, retired. Earl Grey again succeeded him; the opposition of the peers was conquered, and the reform bill became law by an immense majority, June 4, 1832.

A few weeks before the passing of this measure, Benjamin Disraeli made his first attempt to gain the suffrages of a constituency. A vacancy had occurred in the borough of High Wycombe, owing to the withdrawal of one of its Liberal members, Sir Thomas Baring, and the young author put himself forward to contest the seat. Maintaining the views, which he afterwards developed—that from the democratic character of the English constitution a political policy, based upon a union between the Tory party, such as it had been established by Wyndham and Bolingbroke, and not as it had degenerated into by the teaching of Eldon and Wellington, and the working classes, was the one most beneficial for the

interests of the country—he issued his address as an independent member. He was supported both by Tories and Reformers, though in the balance the favour of the former preponderated. His political creed on this occasion has been called unintelligible, yet it was both lucid and simple. He was strongly opposed to the Whigs, because he held that their object was to curtail the power of the crown, and extend the influence of the “governing families;” whilst their supporters, the middle classes, as he never ceased to assert, were both mischievous and incompetent whenever they attempted to direct matters of government.

“This is a middle-class movement,” said Mr. Disraeli in 1848, when opposing Mr. Hume’s motion to amend the national representation, on account of its tinkering with the constitution, in order to gratify the prejudices of a section of the country—“This is a middle-class movement: it is nothing more nor less than an attempt to aggrandize the power of that body of persons who have frankly told us that this is a middle-class government, and, therefore, that they will take care of their own interests and their own objects. The House will not forget what that class has done in its legislative enterprises. I do not use the term ‘middle-class’ with any disrespect; no one more than myself estimates what the urban population has done for the liberty and civilization of mankind; but I speak of the middle-class as of one which avowedly aims at predominance; and therefore it is expedient to ascertain how far the fact justifies a confidence in their political capacity. It was only at the end of the last century that the middle-class rose into any considerable influence, chiefly through Mr. Pitt—that minister whom they are always abusing. The first great movement in which they succeeded, showing their power over the people out of doors, independent of parliament, was the abolition of the slave trade—a noble and sublime act—but carried with an entire ignorance of the subject, as the event has proved. How far it has aggravated the

horrors of slavery, I stop not now to inquire. I make only one observation upon it with reference to the present subject of debate. The middle class emancipated the negroes; but they never proposed a Ten Hours Bill. So much for that move. The interests of the working classes of England were not much considered in that arrangement. Having tried their hand at colonial reform, by which, without diminishing the horrors of slavery, they succeeded in ruining our colonies—they next turned their hands to parliamentary reform, and carried the Reform Bill. But observe, in that operation, they destroyed, under the pretence of its corrupt exercise, the old industrial franchise, and they never constructed a new one. So much for the interests of the people in their second great legislative enterprise. So that, whether we look to their colonial reform or their parliamentary reform, they entirely neglected the industrial classes. Having failed in colonial as well as in parliamentary reform—and I need not show how completely they have failed in parliamentary reform, for the debate of this night is the perfect proof of that fact—they next tried commercial reform, and introduced free imports under the specious name of free trade. How were the interests of the working classes considered in this third movement? More than they were in their colonial or their parliamentary reform? On the contrary, while the interests of capital were unblushingly advocated, the displaced labour of the country was offered neither consolation nor compensation; but was told that it must submit to be absorbed in the mass. In their colonial, parliamentary, and commercial reforms, there is no evidence of any sympathy with the working classes; and every one of the measures so forced upon the country has, at the same time, proved disastrous. Their colonial reform ruined the colonies and increased slavery. Their parliamentary reform, according to their own account, was a delusion which has filled the people with disappointment and disgust. If their commercial reform have not proved

ruinous, then the picture that has been presented to us of the condition of England every day for the last four or five months must be a gross misrepresentation. In this state of affairs, as a remedy for half a century of failure, we are, under their auspices, to take refuge in financial reform, which I predict will prove their fourth failure, and one in which the interests of the working classes will be as little considered and accomplished."

Nor was Benjamin Disraeli, as it has been stated, when he addressed the constituency in front of the "Red Lion" hostel at High Wycombe, a reformer in the sense that Joseph Hume and Bulwer Lytton were reformers, though he frankly avowed that he was in favour not only of increasing the number of members of parliament, but also of increasing their privileges and enlarging their political capacity. "I am not one of those," he declares, in his "Vindication of the English Constitution," a treatise which was partly written at this time, though published at a later period, "who believe that the safety of the constitution is consulted by encouraging an exclusive principle in the formation of the constitution of our Third Estate. It is not the supposed democratic character which it has assumed under the new arrangement—I wish I could call it settlement—that fills me with any apprehensions. On the contrary, I wish it were even more Catholic, though certainly not more Papist." Nor was Benjamin Disraeli a Tory in the sense that Canning and Eldon and Wellington had caused the name to be understood. His Toryism was that of Sir William Wyndham, of Lord Bolingbroke, of the second Pitt—the Toryism that had banished placemen from the House of Commons, and had denounced Walpole, that had crushed the Papacy, opposed a standing army, cherished free elections, upheld short parliaments, and which, before the Brights and Cobdens had ever raised their voices, had applied philosophy to commerce and science to finance; it had nothing in common with

the Toryism then prevalent, which regarded every admission to the demands of progress as a sign that the "star of England's glory had set for ever," and that the future was to be the chaos of revolution. Yet the principles of the candidate for the suffrages of High Wycombe were imbued with the soundest Toryism. "This respect for precedent," he writes in his "Vindication," "this clinging to prescription, this reverence for antiquity, which are so often ridiculed by conceited and superficial minds, and move the especial contempt of the gentlemen who admire abstract principles, appear to me to have their origin in a profound knowledge of human nature and in a fine observation of public affairs, and satisfactorily to account for the permanent character of our liberties. Those great men who have periodically risen to guide the helm of our government in times of tumultuous and stormy exigency knew that a State is a complicated creation of refined art, and they handled it with all the delicacy a piece of exquisite machinery requires. They knew that, if once they admitted the abstract rights of subjects, they must inevitably advance to the abstract rights of men, and then that the very foundations of their civil polity would sink beneath them. . . . It is to this deference to what Lord Coke finely styles 'reverend antiquity' that I ascribe the duration of our commonwealth; and it is this spirit which has prevented even our revolutions from being destructive." But his affection for the past did not blind him to the evils that would arise if all its associations were maintained. Where it was necessary to advocate reform he ranked himself as a reformer, though his reforms were to be framed upon the old lines; the constitution was to be restored and renovated, not razed to the ground and then rebuilt. He was a Tory, because he had the reverence of the cultivated mind for antiquity; he was a Reformer, because he believed in the democratic influence. The union of Toryism with enlightened and restrained reform expressed, both in his

youth and in his old age, his political faith. "The Tory party in this country," he writes to Lord Lyndhurst, "is the national party; it is the really democratic party of England. It supports the institutions of the country, because they have been established for the common good, and because they secure the equality of civil rights, without which, whatever may be its name, no government can be free, and based upon which principle every government, however it may be styled, is in fact a democracy." On this occasion when he contested High Wycombe he was opposed by Colonel Grey, the third son of the prime minister, who headed the poll by a majority of eleven votes.

Benjamin Disraeli was soon called upon to make a second appeal to the electors of the borough. Parliament was dissolved August 16, 1832, and in the autumn a general election—the first under the new Reform Bill—ensued. The late candidate for High Wycombe, though he had been defeated, was not disheartened, and he lost no time in issuing his address. In its paragraphs he speaks with no uncertain voice: his opinions are clear and decided. In his advocacy of triennial parliaments, and in his attack upon places and pensions, we see him standing upon his favourite platform—the Toryism of Wyndham and Bolingbroke, and of the party which warred against the power and corruption of Walpole. The nomination system, which the Whigs were utilising in the most barefaced manner to push the fortunes of their friends and followers, also encountered the wrath of his indignation. Yet, as became a Tory adhering to the old principles of the creed, he was true to his teaching of the fusion of aristocracy with democracy, and his voice was raised in favour of such reforms in the condition of the people as he deemed necessary for their happiness and stability. As he candidly admitted in a speech at a public meeting held by his supporters, he was "a Conservative to preserve all that is good in our constitution, a Radical to remove all that is bad." The

address was issued October 1, 1832, and was dated from Bradenham House; it ran thus:—

"TO THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF THE BOROUGH OF CHIPPING WYCOMBE.

"Friends and Neighbours,

"A Dissolution of Parliament, notwithstanding the machinations of those who have clogged the new charter of your rights which you have won with so much difficulty, with all the vexatious provisoos of a fiscal enactment, being an event which cannot be much longer delayed, I think fit to announce my readiness to redeem the pledge which I made to you at the close of the late contest on the hustings of our borough, and to assure you of my resolution to go to the poll to make another, and, I doubt not, triumphant struggle for your independence.

"I warned our late masters of the dangerous precedent of electing a stranger merely because he was the relative of a minister; I foretold, as a consequence of their compliance, a system of nomination as fatal as those close corporations of which you are relieved. The event has justified my prediction. Wycombe has now the honour of being represented by the Private Secretary of the First Lord of the Treasury.*

"A few years back Aylesbury was threatened with the Private Secretary of the Lord Chancellor.† The men of Aylesbury rejected with loathing that which it appears suited the more docile digestion of the late electors of Wycombe. The Private Secretary of the Lord Chancellor was withdrawn, and in his place was substituted an unknown youth, whose only recommendation is, that he is the very young brother of a very inexperienced minister, and one who has obtained power merely by the renunciation of every pledge which procured him an entrance into public life.

"Gentlemen, I come forward to oppose this disgusting system of factious and intrusive nomination which, if successful, must be fatal to your local independence, and which, if extensively acted upon throughout the country, may even be destructive of your general liberties. I come forward wearing the badge of no party and the livery of no faction. I seek your suffrages as an independent neighbour, who, sympathizing with your wants and interests, will exercise his utmost influence in the great national council to relieve the one and support the other.

"But, while I am desirous of entering Parliament as an independent man, I have never availed myself of that much-abused epithet to escape an explicit avowal of my opinions. I am desirous of

* Col Grey, the son of Earl Grey.

† Mr. Le Marchant, the private secretary of Lord Brougham.

assisting in the completion of the machinery of our new constitution, without which perfection I am doubtful whether it will work. I am prepared to support that ballot which will preserve us from that unprincipled system of terrorism with which it would seem we are threatened even in this town.

I am desirous of recurring to those old English and triennial Parliaments of which the Whigs originally deprived us, and, by repealing the taxes upon knowledge, I would throw the education of the people into the hands of the philosophic student, instead of the ignorant adventurer.

"While I shall feel it my duty to enforce on all opportunities the most rigid economy and the most severe retrenchment, to destroy every useless place and every undeserved pension, and to effect the greatest reduction of taxation, consistent with the maintenance of the public faith and the real efficiency of the Government, I shall withhold my support from every Ministry which will not originate some great measure to ameliorate the condition of the lower orders, to rouse the dormant energies of the country, to liberate our shackled industry, and re-animate our expiring credit.

"I have already expressed my willingness to assist in the modification of our criminal code. I have already explained how I think the abolition of slavery may be safely and speedily effected. With regard to the corn laws, I will support any change the basis of which is to relieve the consumer without injuring the farmer; and for the church, I am desirous of seeing effected some extensive commutation which, while it prevents tithe from acting as a tax upon industry and enterprise, will, I trust, again render the clergy what I am always desirous of seeing them, fairly remunerated, because they are valuable and efficient labourers, and influential because they are beloved.

"And now I call upon every man who values the independence of our borough, upon every man who desires the good government of this once great and happy country, upon every man who feels he has a better chance of being faithfully served by a member who is his neighbour, than by a remote representative who, like the idle wind no man regardeth, comes one day we know not whence, and goes the next we know not whither, to support me in this struggle against that rapacious, tyrannical, and incapable faction, who, having knavishly obtained power by false pretences, sillily suppose that they will be permitted to retain it by half measures, and who in the course of their brief but disastrous career have contrived to shake every great interest of the empire to its centre.

"Ireland in rebellion, the colonies in convulsion, our foreign relations in a state of such inextricable confusion, that we are told that war can alone sever the Gordian knot of complicated blunders; the farmer in doubt, the ship-owner in despair, our merchants without trade, and our manufacturers without markets, the revenue declining, and the army increased, the wealthy hoarding their useless capital, and pauperism prostrate in our once-contented cottages—Englishmen, behold the unparalleled empire, raised by the heroic energies of your fathers! Rouse yourselves in this hour of doubt and danger, rid yourselves of all that political jargon and factious slang of Whig and Tory—two names with one meaning, used only to delude you—and unite in forming a great national party which can alone save the country from impending destruction!

"I have the honour to remain,

"Your obliged and devoted servant,

"B. DISRAELI.

"Bradenham House, Oct., 1832."

High Wycombe sent two members to parliament, and three candidates had now entered themselves for the two seats. The return of Mr. Smith, afterwards the second Lord Carington, the lord of the manor, who had represented the borough for many years, was considered assured; hence the real struggle lay between Benjamin Disraeli and his former opponent, Colonel Grey. The nomination took place on the 10th of December, and the following figures showed the result of the poll—Mr. Smith, 179; Colonel Grey, 140; B. Disraeli, 119. For the second time the ambition of the young author had to encounter defeat.

It was only natural that a man—and especially a very confident and somewhat audacious young man—who sought to reduce the debased Toryism then accepted as the faith of the party to its first principles, should lay himself open to misrepresentation. The Whigs were unable to understand how a man could believe in the virtue and efficacy of an aristocracy, and yet attack an oligarchy. The Reformers could not understand how a man believed in the democratic principle, and yet had faith in Toryism. The Tories again, at least several of them, could not understand how a man,

who said he professed their tenets, yet put his trust in the power of the people. To Benjamin Disraeli this apparent confusion of ideas, and this alleged amalgamation of totally opposite forces, were but the logical deductions from premises which he declared could not be disputed. Since, as he clearly proved in his now forgotten pamphlet "What is He?" the Reform Act had destroyed the aristocratic principle in the country, it was necessary, unless the mischievous policy of the Whigs was to be supreme, for all who were anxious to obtain a strong government to advance the democratic principle. "A Tory and a Radical," he cries, "I can understand. A Whig—a democratic aristocrat—I cannot comprehend. If the Tories, indeed, despair of restoring the aristocratic principle, and are sincere in their avowal that the State cannot be governed with the present machinery, it is their duty to coalesce with the Radicals and permit both political nicknames to merge in the common, the intelligible, and the dignified title of a National Party." And what were the objects this national party should set before them? He answers the question some years later when the politician had developed into the practical statesman. This is the reply:—"To change back the oligarchy into a generous aristocracy round a real throne; to infuse life and vigour into the church, as the trainer of the nation, by the revival of convocation, then dumb, on a wide basis, and not as has been done in the shape of a priestly section; to establish a commercial code on the principles successfully negotiated by Lord Bolingbroke at Utrecht, and which, though baffled at the time by a Whig parliament, were subsequently and triumphantly vindicated by his political pupil and heir, Mr. Pitt; to govern Ireland according to the policy of Charles the First, and not of Oliver Cromwell; to emancipate the political constituency of 1832 from its sectarian bondage and contracted sympathies; to elevate the physical as well as the moral condition of the people, by

establishing that labour required regulation as much as property—and all this rather by the use of ancient forms and the restoration of the past, than by political revolutions founded on abstract ideas—appeared to be the course which the circumstances of this country required, and which, practically speaking, could only, with all their faults and backslidings, be undertaken and accomplished by a re-constructed Tory party."

It was a saying of the Duke of Wellington, who, certainly, in his career exemplified the truth of his remark, that "in politics it was impossible always to be consistent." Political history, it would be in vain to deny, exhibits, more than any other form of history, constant changes in the opinion of the individual. We see men ending the exact opposites of how they began; banning what they once blessed, and advocating what they once hotly thwarted: the Tory crossing over to the ranks of advanced Liberalism, the vehement Radical becoming a staunch supporter of all privileges; the advocate of protection contending for free trade; the denouncer of emancipation bringing in a bill for the relief of Catholic disabilities; the opponent of reform trimming his sails to catch the breeze of universal suffrage; the stout upholder of the union between Church and State, paving the way for disestablishment; and the like. We see men who once held opposite opinions, and whose political hate towards each other enlivened the dullness of many a debate, at last sitting on the Treasury bench, and taking sweet counsel together in the same cabinet. Strange coalitions, conversions, and friendships meet us at every turn, as we scan the records of political life, until, like the hero of Waterloo, we arrive at the conclusion that to expect consistency in political life is to look for the impossible.

The simple fact is that in the pursuit of politics consistency is not only an impossibility but an absurdity. If the spirit of the age were fixed, there is no reason why a man should not be as consistent in maintaining the opinions he holds in political

life as he is in private life. But in the study of politics—a subject ever developing with the progress of the nation in culture and civilization—to be consistent is only another word for either a culpable obstinacy or a culpable narrow-mindedness. For the man of to-day to pique himself upon professing the same opinions he entertained a generation since is simply to assert that, whilst the world is marching on, he prefers to stand still. All that we have a right to expect from our legislators is, that they will not express their views upon any grave question without having first devoted sound study to the subject, and that they will arrive at their conclusions only after weighty consideration. The vice of parliamentary life is not that men frequently change their opinions, but that they are in the habit of adopting them without previous thought or reflection; then, enlightened by subsequent study, they feel compelled—like another Fox, or Wellington, or Peel, or Palmerston—to abandon the teaching they once inculcated. We must bear this fact in mind when we have to deal with those occasions when Mr. Disraeli did not so much change his opinions as he felt bound to change his policy in order to be in that harmony with the spirit of the age, which the private individual can ignore, but the statesman must consult and respect. Yet few ministers throughout a long career have been so true to the political creed they professed as Lord Beaconsfield; he was true, not because he shut his eyes to advancement, but because he anticipated its strides, and only arrived at his conclusions after mature study and reflection. In his speeches and early pamphlets he foreshadowed the policy he adopted when he became minister of England. Throughout his life he was the steady and persistent foe of the Whigs. In his reform bill of 1867

he put into practice the tenets he promulgated on the hustings at High Wycombe, and advocated in his pamphlets, "What is He?" and the "Vindication of the English Constitution." The interest he took in the working classes, visible in the pages of his "Coningsby" and "Sybil," practically revealed itself when he possessed the power and opportunity of office. And his much-derided imperial policy, which raised his country to a position she had not occupied since the days of Palmerston, can be foretold from a perusal of his novel "Tancred," of his speeches during the Crimean war, and from every word that fell from his lips during a debate upon the foreign policy of England. Never have his enemies more stultified themselves, never have they laid themselves more easily open to a crushing refutation, never have they more clearly revealed the unscrupulous character of their hate, than when they made the charge against Benjamin Disraeli that his life was a tissue of inconsistencies. He was consistent, not because he was beneath the influence of the obstinacy and the prejudices of an Eldon, but because he was far-seeing, and had drawn up the articles of his political creed only after deep reading and reflection. The spiteful hacks on the press who had failed to write themselves into consular appointments, and the pamphleteering parsons who displayed the sweetness of the Christian character by rabid attacks which were always so irritatingly ignored, would have done wiser according to their miserable lights, instead of branding Lord Beaconsfield as "a political apostate," to have confined themselves to their favourite taunt, that "he had not a drop of English blood in his veins." The sneer essentially appealed to the audience they addressed, since it always impressed the vulgar and gratified the malevolent.

CHAPTER II.

"FORTI NIHIL DIFFICILE."

BENJAMIN DISRAELI was now for the third time to court political fortune at High Wycombe. Early in the December of 1834 he issued his address, and prepared to do battle against his old opponents. The turn of events was beginning to favour his ambition. The Grey ministry was not a happy family. When men of different political opinions agree to unite for the purpose of remedying abuses, there will always be those amongst the number who, on every occasion, advocate reform, as well as those who are nervously sensitive about meddling with established institutions, unless when absolutely compelled. There will be the men who wish to uproot the tree, the men who are content with lopping off a branch here and there and shoring up its trunk, and the men who fear to disturb vitality by any interference. These disintegrating elements soon appeared in the Grey cabinet. At first, animated by the impulse of a powerful majority, it entered upon a course of active legislation; it abolished slavery in the West Indies, it destroyed commercial monopoly in the East, it instituted reforms in the Irish Church Establishment, it re-arranged our Poor Law system. Then divisions began to ensue; for some of his followers Earl Grey held opinions that were too advanced, for others he was too timid and retrogressive. Early in the March of 1833 the passionate and indiscreet Lord Durham, who was pledged to household suffrage and vote by ballot, resigned. The following year, on the disputed question of the reduction of the Irish Church Establishment, Mr. Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby), Sir James Graham, the Earl of Ripon, and the Duke of Richmond severed themselves from the ministry; they maintained that to appropriate the

revenues of the Irish Church to the purposes of the State was nothing less than sacrilegious confiscation. The renewal of the Coercion Act completed the dissolution of the original elements of the Reform cabinet. Ireland was in one of her customary fits of turbulence and sedition, and, under the influence of the treasonable oratory of Daniel O'Connell, was agitating for a repeal of the Union. Throughout the country murder and outrage were prevalent, and, unless the reign of law was to give way to a blind and vindictive anarchy, it was necessary to resort to extreme measures. Earl Grey proposed the renewal of the Coercion Act; his colleagues approved of the step, but wished to mitigate the severity of several of its clauses.

The dull, conscientious, fox-hunting Lord Althorp, whose influence in the House of Commons was enormous, desired that the clauses against public meetings should be dropped. The prime minister did not see his way to accept the amendment, and Lord Althorp resigned. In the face of the opposition of his quondam colleague, Earl Grey felt himself powerless to carry the Coercion Bill, and he also gave up the seals of office. Through the suggestions of Lord Brougham the Reform ministry was still kept in power; vacancies were filled up, and those who had not resigned were implored to retain their posts. It was the same house with new tenants. The "exhausted sensualist," Lord Melbourne, succeeded Earl Grey. Lord Althorp, who loved sport and hated office, was, after much persuasion, induced to accept the chancellorship of the exchequer and the lead of the House of Commons, on the condition that the Coercion Bill would be amended. Mr. Stanley was replaced at the Colonial Office by Mr. Spring Rice; the

Duke of Richmond at the Post Office by the Marquis of Conyngham; whilst Mr. Lyttleton succeeded Sir John Hobhouse as chief-secretary for Ireland. The other posts were filled up by their original occupants. Lord Brougham still held the Great Seal; Lord Palmerston was at the Foreign Office; Mr. Grant at the Indian Board; and Sir James Graham at the Admiralty.

For a few months the doctored-up ministry continued in power, busying itself with the Irish Coercion Bill, the Irish Tithe Bill, and offending many of its supporters by its subserviency to O'Connell. Then an accidental circumstance hastened its downfall. Lord Althorp, owing to the death of his father, was removed to the upper house, as Earl Spencer, and consequently had to resign the seals as chancellor of the exchequer. Lord Melbourne now proposed the vacant post to Lord John Russell; but to his surprise, and to the total dismay of his followers, the king, who hated Lord Brougham, and disapproved of the clauses of the Irish Church Bill, availed himself of this opportunity to dismiss the Melbourne cabinet, and to send for the Duke of Wellington. His grace, with his usual ready obedience to the commands of the sovereign, at once complied with the royal wishes, but recommended that the task of forming an administration should be intrusted to Sir Robert Peel, as, since the passing of the Reform Bill, the prime minister ought to belong to the lower house.* His Majesty assented. Sir Robert was then about to winter in Rome, but a messenger was despatched in hot haste to inform him of the change of events, and to request his instant

* "So his grace declared after the Reform Bill was passed as its inevitable result, that henceforth the prime minister must be a member of the House of Commons; and this aphorism, cited as usual by the duke's parasites as demonstration of his supreme sagacity, was a graceful mode of resigning the pre-eminence which had been productive of such great party disasters. It is remarkable that the party who devised and passed the Reform Bill, and who, in consequence, governed the nation for ten years, never once had their prime minister in the House of Commons: but that does not signify; the duke's maxim is still quoted as an oracle almost equal in prescience to his famous query, 'How is the king's government to be carried on?'—*Coningsby*.

return. In the meantime the duke consented to act as first lord of the treasury and secretary of state.

Such was the position of affairs when Mr. Disraeli, for the third time, addressed the constituency of High Wycombe, and offered himself as one of their candidates. Disgusted with the shifting policy of the Grey-Melbourne cabinets, and the frequent alterations in its men and measures, he turned their whole administration into ridicule, and spoke warmly in support of Sir Robert Peel. The speech he delivered on this occasion—which he afterwards published as a pamphlet, entitled “The Crisis Examined”—is among his happiest specimens of oratory. It is replete with eloquence, and bristles throughout with those witty personalities and satirical illustrations which afterwards were among the most formidable weapons his opponents had to contend against. He was in favour of the repeal of the malt tax, he began, since it was an invidious exaction pressing heavily upon an already sufficiently burdened interest. He disapproved of the Irish tithes; “twelve months,” he said, “must not pass over without the very name of tithes in Ireland being abolished for ever; nor do I deem it less urgent that the Protestant establishment in that country should be at once proportioned to the population which it serves.” Still he supported the existence of the Irish Church, because experience had taught him that churches, when despiled, only benefited the aristocracy. “I remember Woburn,” he laughed, “and I tremble.” He was no bigot, and he would grant the dissenters what they claimed in the matter of marriage and registration; also, he was no upholder of church rates. “As for the question of the church rate,” he said, “it is impossible that we can endure that, every time one is levied, a town should present the scene of a contested election. The rights of the establishment must be respected, but for the sake of the establishment itself, that flagrant scandal must be removed.” Further

reformation he would not sanction ; he was pledged to maintain the integrity of the church, and nothing would induce him to depart from his word. He would enter parliament if not as an adherent of Sir Robert Peel, who had displayed how worthy he was of the confidence of the country during the years he had led the Opposition, at least he would attach himself to no other statesman. It was true that the incoming prime minister might be called upon to pass measures that he had before deemed inexpedient, but he generously argued, holding the theory of the Duke of Wellington, that it was impossible always to be consistent with oneself in the profession of politics. "The truth is, gentlemen," he said, "a statesman is the creature of his age, the child of circumstance, the creation of his times. A statesman is essentially a practical character ; and when he is called upon to take office, he is not to inquire what his opinions might or might not have been upon this or that subject—he is only to ascertain the needful and the beneficial, and the most feasible manner in which affairs are to be carried on. The fact is, the conduct and opinions of public men at different periods of their career must not be too curiously contrasted in a free and aspiring country. The people have their passions, and it is even the duty of public men occasionally to adopt sentiments with which they do not sympathize, because the people must have leaders. . . . I laugh, therefore, at the objections against a man that at a former period of his career he advocated a policy different to his present one : all I ask to ascertain is, whether his present policy be just, necessary, expedient ; whether, at the present moment, he is prepared to serve the country according to its present necessities."

The chief feature of the address, however, was the speaker's humorous criticism of the proceedings of the Reform ministry, and of the manner in which it had been patched and re-patched until of its original materials scarcely anything was left. Save the

mordant philippics against Peel, it is the best piece of finished invective that Mr. Disraeli ever indulged in.

"The Reform ministry!" he cried. "Where is it? Let us calmly trace the history of this 'united cabinet.' Very soon after its formation, Lord Durham withdrew from the royal councils; the only man, it would appear, of any decision of character among its members. Still it was a most 'united' cabinet. Lord Durham only withdrew on account of his ill-health. The friends of this nobleman represent him as now ready to seize the helm of the state: a few months back, it would appear, his frame was too feeble to bear even the weight of the Privy Seal. Lord Durham retired on account of ill-health; he generously conceded this plea in charity to the colleagues he despised. Lord Durham quitted the 'united cabinet,' and very shortly afterwards its two most able members in the House of Commons, and two of their most influential colleagues in the House of Lords, suddenly secede. What a rent! But then it was about a trifle. In all other respects the cabinet was most 'united.' Five leading members of the Reform ministry have departed; yet the venerable reputation of Lord Grey, and the fair fame of Lord Althorp, still keep them together, and still command the respect, if not the confidence, of the nation. But marvel of marvels! Lord Grey and Lord Althorp both retire in a morning, and in—disgust. Lord Grey is suddenly discovered to be behind his time, and his secession is even intimated to be a subject of national congratulation; Lord Althorp joins the crew again, and the cabinet is again 'united.' Delightful union! Then commenced a series of scenes unparalleled in the history of the administrations of any country; scenes which would have disgraced individuals in private life, and violated the decorum of domestic order. The lord chancellor dangling about the great seal in post-chaises, and vowing that he would write to the sovereign by the post; while cabinet ministers exchanged menac-

ing looks at public dinners, and querulously contradicted each other before the eyes of an admiring nation. Good God, gentlemen, could this go on? Why, even Mr. Ellice, the Right Hon. W. Ellice—who was so good as to send us down a member of parliament—he could no longer submit to nestle in this falling house, and he too quitted the ‘united’ cabinet because he had—what, for a ducat?—a sore throat! Why they ridicule themselves, and yet the tale is not all told. There is really too much humour in the entertainment. They make us laugh too much—the fun is overdone. It is like going to those minor theatres where we see Liston in four successive farces. Lord Melbourne, whose claim to being prime minister of England, according to the Whigs, is that he is a gentleman, Lord Melbourne flies to the king, and informs him that a plan of ‘church reform’ has been proposed in the ‘united cabinet,’ and that Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Spring Rice, the only remaining ministers in the slightest degree entitled, I will not say to the confidence, but to the consideration of the country, have, in consequence, menaced him with their resignations. I doubt not, gentlemen, that this plan of ‘church reform’ was only some violent measure to revive the agitation of the country and resuscitate the popularity of the Whigs, a measure which they never meant and never desired to pass. Perhaps feeling that it was all over with them, it was a wretched *ruse*, apparently, to go out upon a popular measure. However, Lord Melbourne, with as serious a face as he could command, informed His Majesty that the remains of the ‘united cabinet,’ Sir John Hobhouse and Lord John Russell, were still as united as ever, and he ended by proposing that the House of Commons should be led by his lordship, who, on the same principle that bad wine produces good vinegar, has somehow turned from a tenth-rate author into a first-rate politician. And then Lord Melbourne says that the king turned them out! Turned them out, gentlemen! why His Majesty

laughed them out! The truth is that this famous Reform ministry had degenerated into a grotesque and Hudibrastic faction, the very lees of ministerial existence, the offal of official life. They were a ragged regiment, compared with which Falstaff’s crew was a band of regulars. The king would not march through Coventry with them—that was flat. *The Reform ministry*, indeed! Why, scarcely an original member of that celebrated cabinet remained. You remember, gentlemen, the story of Sir John Cutler’s silk hose. Those famous stockings remind me of this famous ministry; for really, between Hobhouse darns and Ellice botching, I hardly can decide whether the hose are silk or worsted. *The Reform ministry!* I daresay now some of you have heard of Mr. Ducrow, that celebrated gentleman who rides upon six horses. What a prodigious achievement! It seems impossible, but you have confidence in Ducrow. You fly to witness it. Unfortunately, one of the horses is ill, and a donkey is substituted in his place. But Ducrow is still admirable; there he is bounding along in a spangled jacket and cork slippers. The whole town is mad to see Ducrow riding at the same time upon six horses; but now two more of the steeds are seized with the staggers, and lo! three jackasses in their stead. Still Ducrow persists and still announces to the public that he will ride round his circus every night on his six steeds. At last all the horses are knocked up, and now there are half a dozen donkeys. What a change! Behold the hero in the amphitheatre, the spangled jacket thrown on one side, the cork slippers on the other. Puffing, panting, and perspiring, he pokes one sullen brute, thwacks another, cuffs a third, and curses a fourth, while one brays to the audience, and another rolls in the sawdust. Behold the late prime minister and the Reform ministry! The spirited and snow-white steeds have gradually changed into an equal number of sullen and obstinate donkeys; while Mr. Merryman, who, like the lord chancellor (Brougham), was once

the very life of the ring, now lies his despairing length in the middle of the stage, with his jokes exhausted and his bottle empty."

In spite, however, of his wit and talk, it was not to be; High Wycombe declined to be won. The election took place, and Benjamin Disraeli for the third time saw himself at the bottom of the poll. The numbers were—Smith, 288; Grey, 147; Disraeli, 128. His irrepressible buoyancy, however, did not forsake him. "He was not at all disheartened," he said at a Conservative dinner held in his honour, "he did not feel in any way like a beaten man. Perhaps it was because he was used to it. He would say of himself, with the famous Italian general, who being asked in his old age why he was always victorious, replied that it was because he had always been beaten in youth."

For the first time in his political career Sir Robert Peel, on taking his seat as the chief of a cabinet, relied entirely upon himself, and cut the leading strings which had bound him to those on whom he depended. In his earlier years he had leant upon the counsels of Lord Eldon, and when he had emancipated himself from Eldon he fell under the magic wand of the hero of Waterloo. But during the period when he had led the opposition against the Reform ministry his character had developed itself. He was not only the chief of the Opposition, but he was the Opposition itself. His powers of debate, his business-like capacity for dealing with details, the confidence with which his character inspired his followers, his patience, the dexterity with which he seized upon the ideas of other people, passing them through the mill of his receptive intellect and turning them out as his own, his exquisite plausibility—all caused him to tower above those who surrounded him. What he advised, his followers carried out; his approval or disapproval gave the cue to those who sat behind him, and seldom had he occasion to complain of disobedience in the ranks. Upon being summoned to

succeed Lord Melbourne, the in-coming premier saw that the narrow and prejudiced Toryism of the Duke of Wellington was out of harmony with the spirit of the times, and he struck out a course for himself. Like all men lacking in originality and self-reliance, he instituted a policy of compromise. He took up a middle position between the short-sighted Toryism that had succeeded the policy of Pitt, and the advanced Radicalism then being taught by Joseph Hume and the reformers. He was not prepared to build up afresh or to lay before his party the designs of the architect; but he would add when necessary to the fabric, and restore where it was crumbling. If with loyalty to his sovereign, he could have avoided the task of forming an administration, he would no doubt have been glad of an excuse. He saw that, though the country was irritated with the Whigs, it was not yet ripe for Tory government. He knew that his power must depend upon the result of a general election, and that he would, almost inevitably, enter parliament with a minority. Had he been in England at the time of the dismissal of the Melbourne cabinet he would have advised delay; but he had now no choice except to act as desired by the duke. "I feel it my duty," he said in the House of Commons, "in spite of the prospects before me, to maintain the post which has been offered me, and to stand by the trust which I did not seek, but which I could not decline."

Meanwhile his return from Rome was anxiously expected, and created an excitement in the winter of 1834 seldom visible at that dull season of the year. The clubs were full, country-houses were deserted, men were indifferent to hunting and hurried up to town, whilst the Tadpoles and Tapers, and the other "twelve hundred a yearers," went nervously to and fro, wondering whether, under the new *régime*, their claims would be recognized, and they would again find themselves drawing salary from the treasury. But the great ques-

tion of the hour, about which bets were freely laid, and which excited replies of the most varied character, was who were to form the government, and what was the government to be? "Was it to be," wrote Mr. Disraeli in his clever political romance, "a Tory government or an enlightened-spirit-of-the-age liberal-moderate-reform government? was it to be a government of high philosophy or of low practice; of principle or of expediency; of great measures or of little men? A government of statesmen or of clerks? Of humbug or of humdrum? Great questions these, but unfortunately there was nobody to answer them. They tried the duke; but nothing could be pumped out of him. All that he knew, which he told in his curt, husky manner, was, that he had to carry on the king's government. As for his solitary colleague, he listened and smiled, and then in his musical voice asked them questions in return, which is the best possible mode of avoiding awkward inquiries. It was very unfair this; for no one knew what tone to take; whether they should go down to their public dinners and denounce the Reform Act or praise it; whether the church was to be re-modelled or only admonished; whether Ireland was to be conquered or conciliated."

All doubts were, however, soon set at rest by the arrival of Sir Robert Peel. At once he began to carry out his colourless creed of compromise. He invited two of the most prominent reformers, Mr. (afterwards Lord) Stanley and Sir James Graham, to enter his cabinet, an offer which, however, they declined. In his manifesto to the electors at Tamworth, he denied that he was an opponent of rational reform or a defender of abuses. He declared that he considered the Reform Bill "a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question—a settlement which no friend to the peace and welfare of the country would attempt to disturb, either by direct or insidious means." On taking his seat upon the treasury bench, he bade for support by

a hollow but plausible programme. He offered the prospect of continued peace—the restored confidence of powerful states who were willing to seize the opportunity of reducing great armies, and thus to diminish the chances of hostile collision. He offered reduced estimates, improvements in civil jurisprudence, reform of ecclesiastical law, the settlement of the Irish tithe question, the removal of any real abuse in the church, the redress of such grievances as the dissenters had just reasons to murmur against, with various other taking proposals to catch the public. Yet this programme, excellent on paper and in specious speeches, was found to mean nothing when brought under the fierce light of committees.

"The Tamworth manifesto of 1834," comments Mr. Disraeli, "was an attempt to construct a party without principles; its basis therefore was necessarily latitudinarianism; and its inevitable consequence has been political infidelity. At an epoch of political perplexity and social alarm, the confederation was convenient, and was calculated by aggregation to encourage the timid and confused. But when the perturbation was a little subsided, and men began to inquire why they were banded together, the difficulty of defining their purpose proved that the league, however respectable, was not a party. The leaders indeed might profit by their eminent position to obtain power for their individual gratification, but it was impossible to secure their followers that which, after all, must be the great recompense of a political party, the putting in practice of their opinions; for they had none. There was indeed a considerable shouting about what they called Conservative principles; but the awkward question naturally arose, what will you conserve? The prerogatives of the Crown, provided they are not exercised; the independence of the House of Lords, provided it is not asserted; the ecclesiastical estate, provided it is regulated by a commission of laymen. Everything, in short, that is

established, as long as it is a phrase and not a fact."*

The history of this short-lived administration is well known. Aware that he was holding power in face of a majority, Sir Robert Peel exerted all the parliamentary wiles, in which he was so consummate a master, to avoid an open battle. The extreme Tories—looking upon the policy he now for the first time called *Conservatism*, as only Whiggery under a new name—had deserted him. Many of the milder Liberals, mindful of the Peel who had opposed the Reform Bill, doubted his sincerity, and stood aloof. The voice was that of Jacob, they said, but the hands were those of Esau. From February to April the prime minister succeeded in avoiding a pitched battle; then the Irish tithe question forced him to come out of cover. Lord John Russell had moved that the house resolve itself "into a committee of the whole house in order to consider the present state of the church establishment in Ireland, with the view of applying any surplus of the revenues not required for the spiritual care of its members, to the general education of all classes of the people without distinction of religious per-

* We know how wittily the Conservative programme was summed up in "Coningsby":—

"By Jove!" said the panting Buckhurst, throwing himself on the sofa, "it was well done; never was any thing better done. An immense triumph! The greatest triumph the Conservative Cause has had. And yet," he added, laughing, "if any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative Cause is, I am sure I should not know what to say."

"Why, it is the cause of our glorious institutions," said Coningsby. "A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an Aristocracy that does not lead."

"Under whose genial influence the order of the Peasantry, 'a country's pride,' has vanished from the face of the land," said Henry Sydney, "and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers, and who burn ricks."

"Under which," continued Coningsby, "the Crown has become a cipher; the Church a sect; the Nobility drones; and the People drudges."

"It is the great constitutional cause," said Lord Vere, "that refuses everything to opposition; yields everything to agitation; conservative in Parliament, destructive out-of-doors; that has no objection to any change provided only it be effected by unauthorized means."

"The first public association of men," said Coningsby, "who have worked for an avowed end without enunciating a single principle."

"And who have established political infidelity throughout the land," said Lord Henry.

"By Jove!" said Buckhurst, "what infernal fools we have made ourselves this last week!"

suasion." Sir Robert felt bound to oppose the motion. He denied the right of the legislature to alienate ecclesiastical property for secular purposes. He described the move of Lord John Russell as a proposal to affirm an abstract right to deal with an imaginary surplus at some indefinite period, which might never arrive. What was to be gained, he asked, by the affirmation of so vague a proposition? It might serve as another firebrand to kindle the inflammatory wars of Irish religious sentiment, but it could not lead to any practical good. The house, however, supported the motion of Lord John by a majority of thirty-three, and the prime minister, accepting his defeat, sent in his resignation.

"Two political results," writes Mr. Doubleday in his memoir of Sir Robert Peel, "unquestionably sprung out of this short and singular episode. One was that Sir Robert Peel, by the nerve and readiness which he displayed, added to his reputation as a first-rate debater and man of business. The second was the confidence in his future strength, which he now acquired from the contemplation of the altered position of his political rivals. This renewal of confidence was quite apparent in those addresses which his presence at certain civic festivals, got up probably for that purpose, enabled him to utter; and the emphatic advice of 'Register! register! register!'"* with which he greeted his friends on one of these occasions, demonstrated that he trusted to open for himself the avenue to future power, and distinctly foresaw a time when he should again hold in his hand the destinies of his country." Mr. Disraeli indulges in similar reflections. "We believe we may venture to assume," he writes, "that at no period during the movements of 1834-35 did Sir Robert Peel ever believe in the success of his administration. Its mere failure could occasion him little dissatisfaction; he was compen-

* "There is nothing like a good small majority," said Mr. Taper, "and a good registration."

"Ay! register, register, register!" said the duke. "Those were immortal words."—*Coningsby*.

sated for it by the noble opportunity afforded to him for the display of those great qualities, both moral and intellectual, which the swaddling-clothes of a routine prosperity had long repressed, but of which his opposition to the Reform Bill had given to the nation a significant intimation. The brief administration elevated him in public opinion, and even in the eye of Europe; and it is probable that a much longer term of power would not have contributed more to his fame."

On the resignation of the Peel cabinet the king had no alternative but to re-instate Lord Melbourne—"the minister, not of his wish, but of his necessity"—in power. This change of government brought again Benjamin Disraeli to the front. Mr. Henry Labouchere, the member for Taunton, had been appointed master of the mint and vice-president of the board of trade, and, as a natural consequence, vacated his seat. On appearing before his constituency for re-election, he found himself opposed by the thrice-rejected of High Wycombe. The contest was unequal, yet Mr. Disraeli had no reason to complain of his reception; the Tories gave him their support, and he found in the borough a good following to encourage him to proceed actively with his canvass. In his address and in his speeches, he frankly avowed the principles he professed. He had been accused, he said, of inconsistency, because, on the one hand, though a Tory, he appreciated the influence of the working classes, and, on the other, though he admitted the claims of a democracy, he supported an aristocracy; but, as a matter of fact, if there were one thing he piqued himself upon more than another, it was his consistency. He had always resisted, with his utmost energy, the party of which his opponent was a member, for he had never ceased to avow that the Whigs were an anti-national party, careful only to identify their own interests with those of the country. He had considered it his duty to thwart the Whigs, to insure their discomfiture, and, if possible, to effect their

destruction as a party. For these ends he had strenuously laboured; and since, on his entering political life, he had found the Tory party "a shattered, a feeble, a disheartened fragment, self-confessing its own inability to carry on the king's government, and announcing an impending revolution," he sought—openly sought—by new combinations to oppose the policy of the Whigs. But how was that policy to be opposed? Where were the elements of a party to keep the Whigs in check, and to bring back the old constitutional balance? "Gentlemen," he cried, addressing the Taunton electors, "I thought they existed in the liberal Tories and in those independent Reformers who had been returned to parliament independently of the Whigs. I laboured for their union, and I am proud of it. Gentlemen, remember the Whig policy! they had a packed parliament; they had altered the duration of parliaments once before; I wished to break their strength by frequent elections and frequent appeals to a misgoverned people, and, therefore, I advocated a recurrence to those triennial parliaments which it was once the proudest boast of the Tories to advocate. I wished to give the country, gentlemen, a chance of representing the neighbouring towns, where they are esteemed, instead of the nominees of a sectarian oligarchy. Therefore, I proposed the adoption of the ballot in the only constituencies willing to assume it. And now, where is my inconsistency?" The Whig party had fallen to pieces; the object for which he, Benjamin Disraeli, had laboured was attained; the balance of parties was restored; hence, measures which at one time it had been necessary for him to advocate, could now be abandoned. In other words, he acted upon the opinions he had advanced some months before at High Wycombe, when defending Sir Robert Peel for the course he might in the future pursue. What had been "just, necessary, and expedient" when the Tories were disheartened and disunited, and the Whigs powerful and unanimous, was now no

longer just, necessary, and expedient when the Whigs were divided and overthrown, and the Tories organized and sanguine.

In the course of the various speeches he delivered on that occasion Benjamin Disraeli made frequent reference to the condition of Ireland and his remarks led to a quarrel which malice will not willingly let die. As the witty ribosomes uttered by Lord Beaconsfield to the more conspicuous of his opponents will endure as long as our parliamentary debates continue to excite interest, so will the fierce verbal onslaught of Daniel O'Connell upon the then Mr. Disraeli continue to be raked up and remembered. Nor can it be said that in the contest, if the object of abuse be to sting and stick, the defeat was with the so-called Liberator. Ireland was at this time a thorn festering more sorely than usual in the political flesh of England. The evils under which she laboured had beneath the selfish and mischievous policy of O'Connell, been the means of creating such mutinous discontent that nothing short of dismemberment of the empire would satisfy the rebels. It was neither absenteeism, nor Protestantism, nor landlordism, nor exclusion from the suffrage, that was now complained of: the one and only grievance was the existence of the English in Ireland. At first O'Connell had been just and moderate in his demands; but as his power increased, with it the nature of his requests developed. From Catholic emancipation he passed to reform, and when these had been granted he raised the cry of "Ireland for the Irish!" which, being interpreted, signified an Irish parliament with a Catholic majority, and repeal of the Union. He held the balance between parties at Westminster, and forced the Whigs to recognize the authority he swayed. If England is to govern Ireland she must rule her with the strong arm, which refuses to relax its firm hold until disaffection is stamped out. The arm of Lord Melbourne was not strong; he truckled

to O'Connell; and between the Whigs and the agitator a secret treaty had been entered into, by which O'Connell pledged himself to support the government in return for the aid of the ministry in pushing forward his own pet Irish schemes. These schemes had however, for their object more the advancement of the agitator than the prosperity of Ireland. "The Catholic church," writes Mr. Froude, "owed much to O'Connell; the people less than nothing. No practical good thing, not even the smallest, ever came to the Irish peasant from his glorious liberator. Emancipation and agitation might make the fortunes of patriotic orators, and make the castle tremble before the Catholic archbishops; but they drained no bogs, filled no hungry stomachs, or patched the rags in which the squalid millions were shivering: and still as the potato multiplied, the people multiplied, and beggary multiplied along with them. O'Connell cared no more for the poor than the harshest of Protestant absentees. The more millions that he could claim as behind him, the mightier he seemed. His own estates at Derrynane and Cahirciveen were as naked, as neglected, as subdivided, as littered with ragged crowds depending on a single root for their subsistence, as any other in the county to which he belonged."

It had so happened that when Benjamin Disraeli was contesting Wycombe for the first time, his friend Lytton Bulwer had endeavoured to obtain a letter of recommendation to the constituency for him from O'Connell, who, though a representative reformer, was not then the violent, unscrupulous demagogue he afterwards so pitifully developed into. O'Connell had courteously replied that he regretted having no acquaintance at Wycombe to whom he could recommend Mr. Disraeli. "It grieves me, therefore," he wrote, "to be unable to serve him on his canvass. I am as convinced as you are of the great advantage the cause of genuine reform would obtain from his return. His readiness to carry the

Reform Bill into practical effect towards the production of cheap government and free institutions is enhanced by the talent and information which he brings to the good cause. I should certainly express full reliance on his political and personal integrity, and it would give me the greatest pleasure to assist in any way in procuring his return, but that, as I have told you, I have no claim on Wycombe." These words were kind, encouraging, and in every way honourable to the writer; but the O'Connell of 1832 was a totally different man to the arrogant, vituperative bully of 1835. He had not yet been totally demoralized by the homage of the rabble, who insulted humanity by calling themselves men. When Benjamin Disraeli perceived the traitorous course the agitator, shortly after the Reform Bill, had entered upon, and that the O'Connell policy was hostile to the welfare of the country, he felt it incumbent upon himself, then expounding his views to a new constituency, to speak in no measured terms upon the subject. On the occasion, which has now become historical, he alluded to the strange alliance that had been effected between Lord Melbourne and the Irish tribune, and in the course of his remarks, said:—"I look upon the Whigs as a weak, but ambitious party, who can only obtain power by linking themselves with a traitor. I ought to apologise to the admirers of Mr. O'Connell, perhaps, for this hard language. I am myself his admirer, so far as his talents and abilities are concerned, but I maintain him to be a traitor."

When this speech was brought to the ears of the agitator, his anger was extreme. He was then at Dublin, carrying on his dirty business as a professional sedition-monger, and, happening at the time to address a trades' union meeting, he thus delivered himself of his wrath:—"Never," he exclaimed, "in the annals of political turpitude, was there anything deserving the name of blackguardism to equal the attack of Benjamin Disraeli upon me. What is

my acquaintance with this man?" he yelled. "Just this. In 1831, or the beginning of 1832, the borough of Wycombe became vacant. I then knew him, but not personally—I knew him merely as the author of one or two novels. He got an introduction to me, and wrote me a letter stating that I was a Radical reformer, and as he was also a Radical, and was going to stand upon the Radical interest for the borough of Wycombe, where he said there were many persons of that way of thinking who would be influenced by my opinion, he would feel obliged by receiving a letter from me, recommedatory of him as a Radical. His letter to me was so distinct upon the subject, that I immediately complied with the request, and composed as good an epistle as I could in his behalf. I am in the habit of letter-writing, and Mr. Disraeli thought this letter so valuable that he not only took the autograph, but had it printed and placarded. It was, in fact, the ground upon which he canvassed the borough. He was, however, defeated, but that was not my fault. I did not demand gratitude from him; but I think if he had any feeling of his own he would conceive I had done him a civility at least, if not a service, which ought not to be repaid by atrocity of the foulest description."

Oblivious of the fact, that whereas in 1831 he was the foe of the Whigs, and was now their ally—oblivious, also, of the culpable development of his views, that whereas in 1831 he preached moderate reform, he now advocated decided revolution—O'Connell proceeded in the following strain:—

"At Taunton this miscreant had the audacity to style me an incendiary! Why, I was a greater incendiary in 1831 than I am at present, if I ever were one; and if I am, he is doubly so for having employed me. Then he calls me a traitor. My answer to this is—he is a liar. He is a liar in action and in words. His life is a living lie. He is a disgrace to his species. What state of society must that be that

could tolerate such a creature—having the audacity to come forward with one set of principles at one time, and obtain political assistance by reason of those principles, and at another to profess diametrically the reverse! His life, I say again, is a living lie. He is the most degraded of his species and kind; and England is degraded in tolerating or having upon the face of her society a miscreant of his abominable, foul, and atrocious nature. His name shows he is by descent a Jew. . . . I have the happiness of being acquainted with some Jewish families in London; and more accomplished ladies, or more humane, cordial, high-minded, or better-educated gentlemen, I have never met. It will not be supposed, therefore, that when I speak of Disraeli as the descendant of a Jew, that I mean to tarnish him on that account. They were once the chosen people of God. There were miscreants amongst them, however, also, and it must have certainly been from one of those that Disraeli descended. He possesses just the qualities of the impenitent thief who died upon the cross, whose name, I verily believe, must have been Disraeli. For aught I know, the present Disraeli is descended from him, and with the impression that he is, I now forgive the heir-at-law of the blasphemous thief who died upon the cross."

This speech found its way into several newspapers, and was especially viciously approved of, and commented upon, by the *Globe*, then an organ attached to the interests of the Whig party.

It was in the days when a man, smarting under severe insult, appealed to his sword instead of to his solicitor, and Mr. Disraeli was not slow in sending a challenge to the Irish tribune. It had so happened that in a former duel O'Connell had the misfortune to kill his man, and, like the distinguished Frenchman, Emile deGirardin, who has lately passed from us, he registered a solemn vow that under no provocation would he ever accept another challenge to mortal combat. A high-minded man under

such conditions, and aware that he could not be called to account for his words, would have been more than usually careful and measured in his language when dealing with an opponent, or with matters that he strongly disapproved of; but O'Connell was, in his moral capacity, in no way superior to the usual run of his noisy, coarse, blustering class; in his political acts there was a good deal of the knave, and in his private acts there was something of the poltroon. He refused to go out with Mr. Disraeli. His son, who had once before fought for his father, and had fired before his time, was then challenged to "resume your vicarious duties of yielding satisfaction for the insult which your father has so long lavished with impunity upon his political opponents." Morgan O'Connell, however, was no fire-eater, and in a somewhat craven letter he begged to be excused. Thus debarred from obtaining the satisfaction then customary in cases of this kind, Mr. Disraeli had recourse to his pen, a weapon which he no doubt wielded with greater dexterity than he would have the sword. He wrote to O'Connell, and sent a copy of the letter to the *Times*, a journal which at this time always inserted his correspondence. It is dated May 5, 1835, and thus it runs:—

"MR. O'CONNELL,

"Although you have placed yourself out of the pale of civilization, still I am one who will not be insulted, even by a Yahoo, without chastising it. When I read this morning in the same journals your virulent attack upon myself, and that your son was at the same moment paying the penalty of similar virulence to another individual on whom you had dropped your filth,* I thought that the consciousness that your opponents had at length discovered a source of satisfaction might have animated your insolence to unwonted energy, and I called upon your son to reassume his vicarious office of yielding satisfaction for his shrinking sire. But it seems that that gentleman declines the further exercise of the pleasing duty of enduring the consequences of your libertine

* Lord Alvanley, on being freely abused by O'Connell, called the agitator a "bloated buffoon." Morgan O'Connell felt bound to defend his father, when the duel ensued in which the son fired too soon.

harangues. I have no other means, therefore, of noticing your effusion but this public mode. Listen then to me.

"If it had been possible for you to act like a gentleman, you would have hesitated before you made your foul and insolent comments upon a hasty and garbled report of a speech which scarcely contains a sentence or an expression as they emanated from my mouth; but the truth is, you were glad to seize the first opportunity of pouring forth your venom against a man whom it serves the interest of your party to represent as a political apostate."

After severely alluding to the apostacy of O'Connell in abusing the Whigs, and then cementing an alliance with the party he had so freely denounced, the letter thus concludes:—

"I admire your scurrilous allusion to my origin. It is quite clear that the 'hereditary bondsman' has already forgotten the clank of his fetters. I know the tactics of your church; it clamours for toleration, and it labours for supremacy. I see that you are quite prepared to persecute. With regard to your taunts as to my want of success in my election contests, permit me to remind you that I had nothing to appeal to but the good sense of the people. No threatening skeletons canvassed for me; a death's-head and cross-bones were not blazoned on my banners. My pecuniary resources, too, were limited; I am not one of those public beggars that we see swarming with their obtrusive boxes in the chapels of your creed, nor am I in possession of a princely revenue wrung from a starving race of fanatical slaves. Nevertheless, I have a deep conviction that the hour is at hand when I shall be more successful, and take my place in that proud assembly of which Mr. O'Connell avows his wish no longer to be a member. I expect to be a Representative of the people before the Repeal of the Union. We shall meet at Philippi; and rest assured that, confident in a cause, and in some energies which have been not altogether unproved, I will seize the first opportunity of inflicting upon you a castigation which will make you at the same time remember and repent the insults that you have lavished upon

"BENJAMIN D'ISRAELI."

The next step of the writer was to contradict the mis-statements that had got abroad, and, notably, to refute the garbled and mischievous construction put upon the affair by the *Globe* newspaper. Again, he

took into his confidence the columns of the leading journal. It is necessary, he wrote, owing to the false reports that had been circulated, to enter into some detail with regard to the controversy between himself and Mr. O'Connell, and especially with regard to the misconstructions adopted by the *Globe*. He emphatically denied the truth of any of the statements made by the Irish tribune. He held the same political opinions now as he had advanced when first he contested High Wycombe. He did not require Mr. O'Connell's recommendation, or that of any one else for the borough, the suffrages of whose electors he had the honour to solicit. His family resided in the neighbourhood; he stood alike on local influence and distinctly avowed principles, and he opposed the son of the prime minister. He was absent from England during the discussion on the Reform Bill, and, on his return, the bill was virtually, though not formally, passed. "I found the nation," he writes, "in terror of a rampant democracy; I saw only an impending oligarchy. I found the House of Commons packed, and the independence of the House of Lords announced as terminated. I recognized a repetition of the same oligarchical *coup d'état* from which we had escaped by a miracle little more than a century before; therefore I determined, to the utmost of my power, to oppose the Whigs. Why, then, it may be asked, did I not join the Tories? Because I found the Tories in a state of ignorant stupefaction. The Whigs had assured them that they were annihilated, and they believed them. They had not a single definite or intelligible idea as to their position and their duties, or the character of their party. They were haunted with a nervous apprehension of that great bugbear, 'the people'—that bewildering title under which a miserable minority contrives to coerce and plunder the nation.

They were ignorant that the millions of the nation required to be guided and encouraged, and that they were that nation's natural leaders, bound to marshal and to enlighten them. The Tories trembled at a coming

anarchy: what they had to apprehend was a rigid tyranny. They fancied themselves on the eve of a reign of terror, when they were about to sink under the sovereignty of a Council of Ten. The Tories in 1832 were avowedly no longer a practical party; they had no system and no object; they were passive and forlorn. They took their seats in the House of Commons after the Reform Act as the senate in the forum, when the city was entered by the Gauls, only to die." He was desirous of obtaining a seat in parliament to combat the machinations of the Whigs; his principles were those having for their end the fusion of aristocracy with democracy; on his committee were Tories as well as Radicals, and he candidly admitted that he asked the aid of both to bear him on to victory. "And now, sir," he proceeds, "for Mr. O'Connell. Mr. O'Connell in 1832 was in a very different situation to Mr. O'Connell in 1833. The *Globe*, which historically informs us that in 1832 I was to become a member of Mr. O'Connell's tail, forgets that at that period Mr. O'Connell had no tail, for this was previous to the first general election after the Reform Act. Mr. O'Connell was not then an advocate for the dismemberment of the empire, the destruction of the church, and the abolition of the House of Lords. His lips overflowed with patriotism, with almost Protestant devotion to the establishment, with almost English admiration for the constitution. Our contest at Wycombe was a very warm one—every vote was an object. A friend of mine, interested in my success, knowing that I was supported by that portion of the constituency styled Radical, applied to Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Hume, with whom he was intimately acquainted, to know whether they had any influence in Wycombe, and requested them to exercise it in my favour. They had none, and they expressed their regret in letters to this gentleman, who forwarded them to me at Wycombe, and my committee, consisting of as many Tories as Radicals, printed them."

Their support was accorded to him, not because they as Tories or Radicals had entirely agreed with him in all his opinions, but because they were united on the one vital question—hostility to the Whig interest. It had been asserted that he stood on Radical principles at High Wycombe; if so, why, he asks, did the Whigs oppose him as a Tory? He frankly avowed that he had advocated triennial parliaments and vote by ballot, because he then was of opinion that the only way to shatter the power of the Whigs was by frequent appeals to the country, and by preventing them from "exercising a usurious influence over the petty tradesmen who are their slaves and their victims" in the number of little towns the late Reform Bill had enfranchised. But the Whigs had now fallen to pieces; the balance of parties had been restored; and since it was no longer necessary to advocate the measures he had formerly advanced, he had allowed himself to abandon them. Still, it was false to assert that he had changed his principles. He held the same views at Taunton as he had at Wycombe. "I came forward on that occasion," he writes, "on precisely the same principles on which I had offered myself at Wycombe, but my situation was different. I was no longer an independent and isolated member of the political world. I had felt it my duty to become an earnest partisan. The Tory party had in this interval roused itself from its lethargy; it had profited by adversity; it had regained not a little of its original character and primary spirit; it had come to remember or to discover that it was the national party of the country; it recognized its duty to place itself at the head of the nation; it possessed the patriotic principles of Sir William Wyndham and Lord Bolingbroke, in whose writings I have ever recognized the most pure and the profoundest sources of political and constitutional wisdom; under the guidance of an eloquent and able leader the principles of primitive Toryism had again developed themselves,

and the obsolete associations which form no portion of that great patriotic scheme had been effectually discarded."

Mr. Disraeli failed, however, to be more successful at Taunton than he had been on the three previous occasions at Wycombe; he was defeated by Mr. Labouchere by a large majority.

Such is the history of the memorable O'Connell episode, to which allusion has so frequently been made in the course of Lord Beaconsfield's career. In the dispute, to our mind, no blame can be attached to the proceedings pursued by Mr. Disraeli. He held the views both of a Tory and a reformer, and he sought the support of Mr. Hume, Mr. Bulwer, and the agitator, to help him with the democratic party, as he sought the aid of the Duke of Chandos to assist him with the aristocratic party. The one broad ground he stood upon was hostility to the Whigs; if it can be shown that, whilst essaying to effect a fusion with the Tories and the Reformers, he was pandering to the policy of the Whigs—as O'Connell afterwards pandered—then most certainly he can be charged with inconsistency and apostacy. But throughout his whole political career, both in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords, the late leader of the Conservative party was the steadfast opponent of Whig principles and practices. Throughout his whole political career he was a Tory, and yet one who believed in the power and development of the working classes. His creed was ever the union of Toryism and Democracy to repel Whiggism, and the selfish and short-sighted policy of the middle classes. But even if it had been as his enemies allege, which is not the case, that Mr. Disraeli had advanced opinions in his youth which his maturer experience had called upon him to change or modify, is that so heinous and unusual an offence in political life? When we reflect upon Mr. Disraeli's whole parliamentary career—his undoubted patriotism, his generosity, when leader of the Opposition, to the government of the day, his

far-seeing policy, the beneficial measures he introduced; and then to have arrayed against these deeds of a brilliant past, the alleged inconsistencies of hot youth, which malice has raked up from the dust of forgetfulness—such charges really become too ludicrous for grave consideration! It is as if, when sailing on the bosom of some majestic river, a man were to look for flecks of mud, and disparage the stream because it was said to have its rise in some hidden, turbid rivulet.

Happily the fierce light of hate can beat upon the public life of Lord Beaconsfield, and fail to find there the faults, the compromises, the tergiversations of many of his predecessors. He never supported a measure when in power, and thwarted it when in opposition, as did Sir Robert Walpole when he entered upon his course of factious antagonism to Stanhope. He never appealed to a prime minister for preferment, and then, when refused, veered round and bitterly attacked the man he had petitioned, as did the first Pitt, when the great minister of peace declined to give him office. No sarcastic speaker could point to him as sitting on the same bench with men whom he had previously denounced, and whose policy he had disapproved of, as Pitt had pointed to Henry Fox, when he united with Newcastle, or as Cobden had pointed to Bernal Osborne, when he took his seat by the side of his "boa-constrictor" friend, Sir James Graham. He never agreed to serve under a man upon whose political actions he had at one time poured out all the vials of his wrathful indignation, as had Charles James Fox when he served under North, unlike—

"The rugged Thurlow, who with sullen scowl,
In surly mood at friend and foe will growl;
Of proud prerogative the stern support,"

he never intrigued with the enemy to keep him in office. He never behaved to any man as the Duke of Wellington behaved to Canning. He never acted towards any measure he had once supported as Peel

acted towards the cause of protection. He was never accused, as Lord Palmerston was accused, of ignoring the control of the crown as to the supervision of official correspondence. Nor was he ever charged, as had been Lord Melbourne and the late Lord Derby, with a culpable indifference to the business of public affairs.

Still if it were true—which it is not—that Mr. Disraeli began life as a Radical, and then went over to the enemy, is he the only man who has changed his political faith? Did not Charles James Fox begin as a Tory and end as the leader of the great Whig party? How often did the Duke of Wellington alter his opinions? How often did Sir Robert Peel alter his opinions? Was not Canning brought up under Whig protection, and did he not commence his parliamentary life as the adherent of Pitt? We know what the wits said of him at Brookes'—

*"The turning of coats so common is grown,
That no one would think to attack it;
But no case until now was so flagrantly known
Of a schoolboy turning his jacket."*

Was not Mr. Stanley a reformer, yet was not the late Earl of Derby the leader of the Tory party? Did not Lord Palmerston begin life as a Tory and then cross over to the Liberal benches? Did not the late Lord Lytton begin life as a Radical, and then end as a Conservative? Was not Sir Francis Burdett a Radical who afterwards became a Tory? And pray, we ask the question without implying anything offensive, what has been the career of him whom Macaulay described as "the rising hope" of stern, unbending Toryism?

The fact is, the study of political biography makes large calls upon the charity of our human nature, and, unless we feel ourselves capable of generously meeting these demands, we shall do wisely to abandon the subject altogether. We should not pay heed to the hot indignation of opposition, for it has as often happened as not that when the opposition has comfortably settled itself upon the Treasury benches,

what once excited its ire excites it no longer, and we see opponents content to pursue a not very dissimilar policy to that which, under less favourable circumstances, has met with their sternest disapproval. We should judge of a party, not by its views when out of office, for the simple fact that it is out of office, but by its conduct when in power. We should look kindly upon the inconsistencies of youthful political ambition, and upon its struggles, which may not, perhaps, always bear a close examination, to push itself through the crowd—reserving our judgment and the severity of our morality for a later date, when the aspirant has developed into the statesman. Remembering human nature, we should be more prone to forget, than to eternally recall, the unsavoury dealings of men desirous of entering parliament, or the intrigues practised by eager partisans to obtain office, and content ourselves with limiting our criticism to the conduct of such men, when they have once become enrolled as legislators, or have taken the oaths as advisers of the crown. We must be satisfied with viewing the race, and not watch too narrowly the details of the training.

Again, thwarted in his political ambition, Benjamin Disraeli once more turned his steps to the forsaken shrine of literature. Late in the year 1835, he published the pamphlet upon which he had been long engaged, and from which we have already quoted, entitled, "A Vindication of the English Constitution, in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord." The peer thus addressed was Lord Lyndhurst, who was quick to discern the great abilities of the young man, and between whom and the future statesman a warm friendship now subsisted. The objects of the pamphlet were to expound political philosophy, as opposed to the utilitarian views of Jeremy Bentham and his school, and to defend Tory opinions from many of the misconceptions with which they were surrounded. Readers of "Coningsby" and "Sybil" will find in the pages of this brilliant constitutional treatise

many of the theories and tenets with which they are familiar; that the monarchy should rest upon a democracy, the crown upon the people, each strengthening the other without the control of parliament; and that the personal power of the monarch should be the centre of our political system, restoring the authority and prerogative of the crown, weakened and restrained by parliamentary encroachments. We have the well-known attacks upon the Whigs, who sought to reduce the English monarch to the character of a Venetian doge, and to exchange the divine right of kings for the divine right of nobles. We listen to the oft-recurring arguments as to the exact position of the House of Commons in the framework of the constitution. It is not the house of the people, nor are its members the representatives of the people: it is "an estate of the realm, and the members of the House of Commons represent that estate." "We know," writes the author, "what happened to the country in the turbulent days before the Restoration, when the lower house, ceasing to be an estate, degenerated into an assembly of delegates of the people, and arrogantly declared that 'the people are the origin of all just power,' and that 'whatever is declared to be law by the House of Commons hath the force of law without the consent of the king or the House of Peers.' Never was tyranny more severe and exacting than when England was ruled by the people. It was 'the people' who established courts more infamous than the Star Chamber, who, to gratify their own petty revenge, seized upon such property as they desired, who cruelly tortured all whom they considered malignant, who opposed that great bulwark of our liberties—trial by jury—who introduced the excise, who raised the taxation of the country from £800,000 a-year to £7,000,000 a-year; and who, indeed, so harshly, so mischievously, and so incompetently ruled the country, that in order to free herself from 'the people' she took refuge in the arms of a military despot." Such was the condition of the

nation when governed by a "vulgar and ignoble oligarchy." Having shown that to be ruled by the divine right of the House of Commons is the most pernicious of all the various forms of control, the writer proceeds to argue in favour of the hereditary principle of the House of Lords, and arrives at the conclusion that such a chamber is "suited to the genius of the country, in harmony with all its political establishments, and founded not only on an intimate acquaintance with the national character, but a profound knowledge of human nature in general." Then dealing with the question of the two great parties into which English political warfare is divided, Mr. Disraeli contends for his favourite theory that the Tory party is essentially the national and democratic party, whilst the Whigs must always be the exclusive and aristocratic party; and here he boldly avows that since 1831 the political power of the Tories has only been maintained "by a series of democratic measures of the greatest importance and most comprehensive character." This statement affords him an opportunity to pass a high eulogium upon the character of his great political hero, Lord Bolingbroke. In the early part of the eighteenth century, the Tory party required re-organization; "and as it is in the nature of human affairs," writes Mr. Disraeli, "that the individual that is required shall not long be wanting, so in the season of which I am treating, arose a man remarkable in an illustrious age, who, with the splendour of an organizing genius, settled the confused and discordant materials of English faction, and reduced them into a clear and systematic order. This was Lord Bolingbroke. Gifted with that fiery imagination, the teeming fertility of whose inventive resources is as necessary to a great statesman or a great general, as to a great poet, the ablest writer and the most accomplished orator of his age, that rare union that in a country of free parliaments and a free press, insures to its possessor the privilege of exercising a

constant influence over the mind of his country, that rare union that has rendered Burke so memorable; blending with that intuitive knowledge of his race which creative minds alone enjoy, all the wisdom which can be derived from literature, and a comprehensive experience of human affairs; no one was better qualified to be the minister of a free and powerful nation than Henry St. John; and destiny at first appeared to combine with nature in the elevation of his fortunes.

"Opposed to the Whigs from principle, for an oligarchy is hostile to genius, and recoiling from the Tory tenets, which his unprejudiced and vigorous mind taught him at the same time to dread and to condemn, Lord Bolingbroke at the outset of his career incurred the common-place imputation of insincerity and inconsistency, because in an age of unsettled parties, with principles contradictory of their conduct, he maintained that vigilant and meditative independence which is the privilege of an original and determined spirit. In the earlier years of his career he meditated over the formation of a new party—that dream of youthful ambition in a perplexed and discordant age, but destined in English politics to be never more substantial than a vision. More experienced in political life, he became aware that he had only to choose between the Whigs and the Tories; and his sagacious intellect, not satisfied with the superficial character of these celebrated divisions, penetrated their interior and essential qualities, and discovered, in spite of all the affectation of popular sympathy on one side, and of admiration of arbitrary power on the other, that this choice was in fact a choice between oligarchy and democracy. From the moment that Lord Bolingbroke, in becoming a Tory, embraced the national cause, he devoted himself absolutely to his party: all the energies of his Protean mind were lavished in their service; and although the ignoble prudence of the Whig minister restrained him from advocating the cause of the nation in the senate, it was

his inspiring pen that made Walpole tremble in the recesses of the treasury, and in a series of writings unequalled in our literature for their spirited patriotism, their just and profound views, and the golden eloquence in which they are expressed, eradicated from Toryism all those absurd and odious doctrines which Toryism had adventitiously adopted, clearly developed its essential and permanent character, discarded *jure divino*, demolished passive obedience, threw to the winds the doctrine of non-resistance, placed the abolition of James and the accession of George on their right basis, and in the complete re-organization of the public mind, laid the foundation for the future accession of the Tory party to power, and to that popular and triumphant career which must ever await the policy of an administration inspired by the spirit of our free and ancient institutions."

This eloquent passage naturally suggests a comparison between the two men. Like Bolingbroke, Mr. Disraeli was the consistent foe of the Whigs. Like Bolingbroke, "he meditated over the formation of a new party," he made his choice "between oligarchy and democracy," and, devoting "all the energies of his Protean mind," he laid the foundation for the future accession of the Tory party to power. Like Bolingbroke, he was gifted with "the splendour of an organizing genius," a "fiery imagination," and a brain teeming with "inventive resources." What Bolingbroke did for the Tory party in his own day, so did Mr. Disraeli after the repeal of the Corn Laws; he "settled the confused and discordant materials of English faction, and reduced them into a clear and systematic order." Bolingbroke was brought up as a Dissenter, Mr. Disraeli as a Jew; yet both men were staunch supporters of the Anglican Church, and firmly upheld the necessity of the union between Church and State. Both men were animated by the keenest desire for the welfare of England; and their sense of patriotism ever caused them to keep a vigilant eye upon the machinations of the

enemy. As Bolingbroke watched the movements of Spain, so did Lord Beaconsfield watch the movements of Russia. The parallel is, however, happily not complete —there is nothing in the career of Mr. Disraeli to suggest a comparison with the intrigues set on foot by Bolingbroke when out of office; and the ending of the two men is very different, the one going down to his grave soured, disheartened, and discredited: the other honoured, trusted, and in the full glory of his power and popularity.

In these days when men are seeking to dismember the empire, and to praise republican institutions at the expense of our own constitution, we shall do wisely to remember the grand words with which Mr. Disraeli concludes his letter to Lord Lyndhurst.* "If neither ancient ages," he writes, "nor the more recent experience of our newer time, can supply us with a parallel instance of a free government, founded on the broadest basis of popular rights, yet combining with democratic liberty aristocratic security and monarchical convenience; if the refined spirit of Greece—if the great Roman soul—if the brilliant genius of feudal Italy—alike failed in realizing this great result, let us cling with increased devotion to the matchless creation of our ancestors, and honour, with still deeper feelings of gratitude and veneration, the English constitution. That constitution, my lord, established civil equality in a rude age, and anticipated by centuries in its beneficent practice the sublime theories of modern philosophy; having made us equal, it has kept us free. If it has united equality with freedom, so also it has connected freedom with glory. It has established an empire, which combines the durability of Rome with the

* It is a matter of some surprise that this pamphlet has not been republished. It is now very scarce, indeed, so scarce, that the only copy I could find was in the British Museum. Our National Library does not, however, appear to think very highly of the work, since it does not honour it with a separate existence, but binds it up with a volume of inferior and uninteresting essays. There are passages in the "Vindication of the English Constitution" as novel and brilliant as anything that Mr. Disraeli ever wrote.

adventure of Carthage. It has, at the same time, secured us the most skilful agriculture, the most extended commerce, the most ingenious manufactures, victorious armies, and invincible fleets. Nor has the intellectual might of England, under its fostering auspices, been less distinguished than its imperial spirit, its manly heart, or its national energy. The authors of England have formed the mind of Europe, and stamped the breathing impression of their genius on the vigorous character of a new world. Under that constitution the administration of justice has become so pure, that its exercise has realized the dreams of some Utopian romance. That constitution has struggled successfully with the Papacy, and finally, and for the first time, proved the compatibility of sectarian toleration and national orthodoxy. It has made private ambition conducive to public welfare, it has baffled the machinations of factions and of parties; and when those more violent convulsions have arisen, from whose periodic visitations no human institutions can be exempt, the English constitution has survived the moral earthquake and outlived the mental hurricane, and been sedulous that the natural course of our prosperity should only be disturbed and not destroyed. Finally, it has secured for every man the career to which he is adapted, and the reward to which he is entitled; it has summoned your lordship to preside over courts and parliaments, to maintain law by learning, and to recommend wisdom by eloquence; and it has secured to me, in common with every subject of this realm, a right—the enjoyment of which I would not exchange for—

'The ermine stole,
The starry breast and coroneted brow,'—
the right of expressing my free thoughts
to a free people."

The Melbourne government, under its sauntering, easy-going premier, was pursuing the tenour of its way, by blundering in its various attempts at legislation, and irritating all classes which wanted their

special interests to be effectively dealt with. Another Junius was now to appear on the scene and pass in review the characters in, and the measures of, the cabinet. During the first months of the year 1836 there appeared in the *Times* newspaper a series of letters signed "Runnymede." These stinging epistles have never been publicly acknowledged by the late Lord Beaconsfield; but there can be little doubt as to whom their authorship is due. Their literary finish, the keenness of their sarcasm, their cutting invective, their wit, their smartness, all reveal the author of "Coningsby" and "Sybil," and the politician who illuminated many a dreary debate by those trenchant personalities which hit off a character in a phrase, or summed up a measure in an epigram. From the full quiver of these "Runnymede Letters" let us select a few barbed shafts. As head of the cabinet, Lord Melbourne is the chief target, and certainly the broad surface he presents for hostile criticism is not spared. He has "sauntered away the destinies of a nation, and lounged away the glory of an empire;" he is incapable of rousing himself from "the embraces of that siren Desidia," to whose fatal influences he is no less a slave than was our second Charles; as a minister he is useless, let him therefore be dismissed, and find an asylum in the gardens of Hampton Court, "where he might saunter away the remaining years of his now ludicrous existence, sipping the last novel of Paul de Kock whilst lounging over a sundial." As was the prime minister, so were his colleagues. Lord John Russell, the author of the "feeblest tragedy in our language," the "feeblest romance in our literature," and the "feeblest political essay on record," has had the misfortune to be born "with a strong ambition and a weak intellect." If a foreigner were told that such a man was the leader of the House of Commons, he might then understand "how the Egyptians worshipped an insect." Lord Brougham had directed many a bitter attack against Mr. Disraeli, his

speeches, and his works; he was now in his turn to feel the lash. "I am informed that your lordship," writes Runnymede, "is occupied in a translation of your treatise of 'Natural Theology' into German on the Hamiltonian system. The translation of a work on a subject of which you know little into a tongue of which you know nothing, seems the climax of those fantastic freaks of ambitious superficiality which our lively neighbours describe by a finer term than 'quackery.'" Lord Palmerston, the dandy of the cabinet, is called "the Sporus of politics, cajoling France with an airy compliment, and menacing Russia with a perfumed cane;" he is "the Lord Fanny of diplomacy" and the "great Apollo of aspiring understrappers;" he has "the smartness of an attorney's clerk and the intrigues of a Greek of the Lower Empire;" he reminds one "of a favourite footman on easy terms with his mistress," and his sense of political honour is thus summed up, "You owe the Whigs great gratitude, my lord, and therefore I think you will betray them." The measures of the cabinet naturally come in for their share of abuse. Whiggery is the mighty dragon "depopulating our fields, wasting our pleasant places, poisoning our fountains, and menacing our civilization." But its end is nigh at hand, "the reign of delusion is about to close." "The man who obtains property by false pretences is transported. Is the party that obtains power by the same means to be saved harmless? Lord Melbourne has established a new colony in Australia; it wants settlers. Let the cabinet emigrate; in the antipodes they will find a home suited to their tastes and characters. The land where the rivers are salt; where the quadrupeds have fins and the fish feet; where everything is confused, discordant, and irregular, is indicated by Providence as the fitting scene of Whig government."

In marked contrast to this bitter badinage is the tribute paid by the writer to the position and character of Sir Robert Peel. The Melbourne government, by its incom-

petency, and the tenacity with which it clung to office, had disgusted all classes. "Never," cried Lord Lyndhurst, addressing his brother peers, "was the state of business in the other house of parliament in the situation in which it was at present—never did a government so neglect so important a part of its duty, that which it had to discharge in parliament, as the government had done during the last five months. The noble viscount [Melbourne] and his colleagues were utterly powerless. They were powerless alike in that and the other house; they were utterly inefficient and incompetent as servants of the crown; and he must add, also, they were equally powerless, incapable, and inefficient as regarded the people." But in proportion as Lord Melbourne had lost the favour of the court, the support of the House of Commons, and the confidence of the country, Sir Robert Peel had risen in the opinion of all classes. He was regarded as "the coming man." "In your chivalry alone," writes the author of the "Runnymede" epistles, "is our hope. Clad in the panoply of your splendid talents and your spotless character, we feel assured that you will subdue this unnatural and unnational monster, and that we may yet see sedition, and treason, and rapine, rampant as they may have of late figured, quail before your power and prowess." A comparison is then instituted between Peel, who at once resigned when he saw he was putting in jeopardy the royal prerogative, and Melbourne, who remained in power in spite of all his past blunders and mismanagement. "What a contrast," exclaims "Runnymede," "does the administration of Sir Robert Peel afford to that of Lord Melbourne! No selfish views, no family aggrandizement, no family jobs, no nepotism! Contrast the serene retirement of Drayton and the repentant solitude of Howick! Contrast the statesman cheered after his factious defeat by the sympathy of a nation with the coroneted Necker, the worn-out Machiavelli, wringing his helpless hands over his heart in remorseful despair,

and looking up with a sigh at his scowling ancestors! Never did Pitt, in the plenitude of his power, enjoy more cordial confidence than that now extended to Sir Robert Peel by every section of the Conservative party. Then, at the head of his united following, let him go forward and rout the Whig camp, already harassed by its divided interests and intestine jealousies." "We look to you," appeals "Runnymede," "with hope and confidence; you have a noble duty to fulfil: let it be nobly done. You have a great task to execute: achieve it with a great spirit. Rescue your sovereign from an unconstitutional thralldom—rescue an august senate, which has already fought the battle of the people—rescue our national church, which your opponents hate—our venerable constitution, at which they scoff; but above all, rescue that mighty body of which all these great classes and institutions are but some of the constituent and essential parts—rescue the Nation."

Shortly after the appearance of these severe strictures in the leading journal of the day, Mr. Disraeli published the novel which is, perhaps, the favourite among the fair sex of all his works. The border line between the sublime and the ridiculous is, we know, very fine; but in the love story of "Henrietta Temple," the sentiment, though sometimes carried to a dangerous extreme, never sinks into the foolish or the contemptible. It enjoys the reputation of being the most perfect love tale in our language; the passion is fervid without coarseness, the hero is tender without effeminacy, whilst the heroine responds to the ardour of her suitor without ever degenerating into mawkishness or sickly gush. It is almost the only love story of pure affection which men read or care to read. The object of its author is "to trace the development of that passion that is at once the principle and the end of our existence; that passion compared to whose delights all the other gratifications of our nature—wealth, and power, and fame—sink into insignificance; and which, nevertheless, by

the ineffable beneficence of our Creator, are open to His creatures of all conditions, qualities, and climes." In this romance we perceive the influences of his foreign origin upon the author. An Englishman would not have dared to write such a book; the fear of ridicule would have ever been before his eyes, paralyzing his passion, and causing his rhapsodies to sink into bathos. He would no more have written "Henrietta Temple" than he would, Teuton-like, indulge in the promptings of affection in public. A Frenchman would have turned the love passages into impropriety, or have marred them by a repellent artificiality. A German would have composed the tale after the teaching of his sentimental school, and when he did not excite laughter by his imbecility, would have wearied by his dullness. But the Semitic instincts—for the Hebrew is sprung from a race as full of passion and poetry as the Celt, yet with all the respect of the Teuton for domestic purity, whilst his egotism and self-reliance render him often somewhat impervious to the fear of ridicule—came to the aid of Mr. Disraeli in the composition of this work, and made him passionate without sensuality, imaginative without improbability, and affectionate without extravagance. "Venetia" soon followed "Henrietta Temple." It has for its central thought the intense love of a daughter for her unknown father, and reproduces many of the incidents that occurred in the lives of Byron and Shelley. There is little plot in the story; but as a study of character it is one of the most thoughtful and best worked-out of all the novels of the author.

And now, once more, was Mr. Disraeli to essay to enter the parliamentary arena: this time to have his efforts crowned with success. William the Fourth, after a brief illness, had passed into the "eternal silence," and according to the constitutional custom when a new sovereign ascends the throne, a general election ensued. An opportunity offered itself to Mr. Disraeli to contest Maidstone. The borough possessed two

seats; Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the senior member, and a stout Tory, was exceedingly popular, and his return was assured; his colleague, however, was a Whig, and much disliked in the town. Mr. Disraeli was asked to stand as the second Tory candidate, and he at once hurried into Kent to meet the constituency. His address was issued on the same lines as his previous ones delivered at High Wycombe and Taunton. He announced himself as "an uncompromising adherent to the ancient constitution, which was once the boast of our fathers, and is still the blessing of their children;" he was convinced that "the reformed religion, as by law established in this country, is at the same time the best guarantee for religious toleration and orthodox purity;" he would "watch with vigilant solicitude over the fortunes of the British farmer," since he sincerely believed that "his welfare is the surest and most permanent basis of general prosperity;" he was in favour of the abolition of church rates, provided he could see his way to some substitute; he opposed the harsh administration of the poor-law, since relief was not a matter of charity, but of right, to the poor deprived by the great families of the monastic lands; and as at Wycombe, so at Taunton, and so now at Maidstone, he maintained the same views he had always advocated. "Here I am, gentlemen," he said, "filling the same place, preaching the same doctrine, and supporting the same institutions as I did at High Wycombe." His opponent was Colonel Perronet Thompson, the author of the "Corn-law Catechism," and a former proprietor of the Radical *Westminster Review*. The contest was actively carried on by both sides; but the influence of the popular Mr. Wyndham Lewis made itself felt in favour of his new colleague, and the ultimate victory of Mr. Disraeli was never in doubt. Mr. Robarts, the disliked member, who had represented Maidstone in the Whig interest in seven successive parliaments, anticipated the verdict of the constituency, and retired before

the nomination day. At a late hour on the polling day a fourth candidate, a Mr. Perry, was started, with no other result, however, than to render himself supremely ridiculous. When the votes were counted up, it was seen that Maidstone had declared itself with no uncertain voice against the Whig government. At the close of the poll, the numbers were :—Lewis, 782 ; Disraeli, 668 ; Thompson, 529 ; and the redoubtable Perry, 25.

The career of Mr. Disraeli is that of a man

who was never suppressed by defeat, who was never disheartened by failure. Many a man anxious to embrace parliamentary honours would, after the frequent rejections Mr. Disraeli had received, have retired from the struggle in disgust, and have abandoned all ideas of a life in the House of Commons. Not so the future Earl of Beaconsfield. He worked, he watched, he waited, and at last his patience was rewarded by being returned as one of the Conservative members for Maidstone.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE HOUSE.

DURING the present generation the House of Commons, owing to the development of the reforms that have been effected in its constitution, has lost many of the characteristics which it formerly possessed. It is now a practical, business-like, but, it must be confessed, a somewhat dull assembly. The elements of youth and wit are conspicuous by their absence, whilst municipal eloquence and vestry-like personalities reign in their stead. Before the abolition of nomination boroughs, a young man of great ability—like the second Pitt, Canning, Macaulay, and others—was taken by the hand by some powerful minister, and launched upon a parliamentary career in the easiest and most inexpensive fashion. The leaders of the great parties, who swayed the opinions of parliament, were always on the watch for talent that might serve their political ends. Many a young man by his clever speeches at the debating-club of his university, by a happy pamphlet, or by a bitter and opportune squib, found himself safely seated on the green benches of the House of Commons as the representative of a borough in the hands of a powerful lord or of a large-acred squire, without his election having cost him more than the issue of his address or the delivery of a few speeches before a sympathetic audience. Commerce had not then assumed the high position it now occupies, nor had the banker's book usurped the influence of the pedigree chart. The lower house was, in a large measure, filled by the representatives of the landed gentry, who knew little of science or the laws of political economy, but who shuddered if they heard a false quantity, and piqued themselves that they were as familiar with the classics as a priest is with his breviary.

A few merchants of the highest class, a few successful lawyers, a few Irish, then as now not held in much esteem, and several clever young men who were the little deities of their university, completed the list. The constitution of such an assembly, though it might not offer the same scope as now exists for the exercise of those talents which especially appeal to what Mr. Disraeli called the “parochial mind,” yet afforded every opportunity for the display of culture. A classical and a literary flavour penetrated the parliamentary eloquence of those days. A speech delivered in the House was a solemn undertaking, and not to be lightly entered upon; its periods were carefully rehearsed; its matter was introduced and dismissed in stately terms worthy of the occasion; the gestures and attitudes of the speaker were studied with a Chatham-like view to effect; whilst his words were listened to by an assembly which never forgot, even in the most feverish times of party heat, that it represented the gentry of England. Then on the following day the details brought forward were fully reported and discussed in the leading journals. Eloquence was thus the most powerful weapon that could be wielded in parliamentary warfare, and it consequently became the favourite and most cultivated of all studies. To be a showy speaker or a ready debater, no matter how incorrect or superficial the sentiments expressed, was to be on the high road to the cabinet; whilst the erudite and the thinker, who could never address a few words to the Speaker without confusion, were completely ignored.

The Reform Bills and the development of the newspaper press have, however, ushered in a new state of things. The abolition of

pocket-boroughs has rendered it impossible for clever but impecunious youth to obtain a seat in parliament. The competition that arises upon every vacancy in the House of Commons, and the rigid measure now most properly dealt out to those guilty of bribery and corruption, make it a matter of necessity at the present day for the candidate for parliamentary honours to be not only a rich man, but one who has also long been courting the favours of a constituency. Those who derive their wealth from industry seldom have attained to fortune till past middle age, and consequently the House of Commons will become more and more the assembly of elderly men; in other words, more grave, more practical, more dull. From its wealth, from its social ambition, and from its business habits, the mercantile element must always be a prominent feature in the lower house; and when men, often deprived in their youth of the advantages of education, betake themselves late in life to a new calling, they have little sympathy with the charms and graces of a cultivated eloquence: with them it is only so much verbiage interfering with "business." Again, owing to the extension of the franchise, members have been returned to parliament who, under less happy circumstances, could never have hoped to have had a seat in that assembly—men who, regarding themselves as the representatives of the masses, do all in their power, by their bigoted ignorance, their spiteful class-hate, and their offensive maintenance of the prejudices they call ideas, to prove themselves worthy of their constituencies. The squire, the successful lawyer, and the naval or military officer, will always have his place in the House of Commons; but instead of being, as he once was, the House itself, he is now only an element in it, and an element which every session will more and more have to retire to the background. By such a body of men—shrewd, hard, economical, practical, and with the education of the academy rather than of the university—oratory is an influence little felt. A speech

now in the House of Commons—save by one of its leading members—is no great event. Before it has been delivered, its matter has been discounted by the newspapers; it is listened to with impatience; and the next morning is but curtly alluded to in the principal journals. To be active on committees; to know your subject thoroughly, however badly, even ungrammatically, such knowledge may be expressed; to be the possessor of a sound common sense—are now of far more use in advancing a politician to office, than all the eloquence of a Bolingbroke, or the brilliancy of a Canning. Oratory, like poetry, requires an audience for its creation and cultivation; where it has no audience, it perishes. During the last forty years parliament has seen only two great orators arise who were not within its walls at the date of the Maidstone election.

These remarks fail to apply to the House of Commons in which Mr. Disraeli first took his seat. Seldom has such an array of talent been presented as was to be found in the popular chamber at St. Stephen's in the session of 1837. On the treasury bench sat the able and versatile Lord John Russell, the leader of the Whig party in the House of Commons, and who then held the seals as secretary of state for the home department. Near him was the foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, the popular man of fashion, ready in debate, witty in retort, but who had not as yet given promise of the statesmanship he was afterwards to display. The polished Lord Morpeth, who held office as chief secretary for Ireland, and Spring Rice, the chancellor of the exchequer, were also occupants of the ministerial bench. Among the supporters of the government were Lytton Bulwer, the poet and novelist, then a Radical of the most pronounced type; the courteous and fluent Lord Leveson; the dandy Sir William Molesworth, the forerunner of the philosophical Radical; "honest Tom Duncombe," the member for Finsbury; Hume, the economist; Grote, the historian; Lord Ashley, the philanthropist; Charles Villiers,

of corn law fame; the witty Charles Buller; and O'Connell, with his eloquent but now almost forgotten lieutenant, Richard Lalor Shiel. On the Tory side of the House were Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the Opposition; the present Mr. Gladstone, then member for Newark; Lord Stanley, "whose knowledge of parliamentary debate resembled an instinct;" Sir Francis Burdett, who had deserted the Whigs; and other members of lesser note. It was before such an audience that the member for Maidstone was to rise to make his maiden speech.

As malice has exaggerated the disadvantages under which Mr. Disraeli laboured in early life, so it has been pleased to exaggerate the collapse of Mr. Disraeli's first parliamentary effort. As a matter of fact the much talked of maiden speech was not a failure in the generally accepted sense of the word. The member for Maidstone, when he rose first to address the House, did not fail as Sir Robert Walpole failed, as Canning failed, as Grattan, Sheridan, and Erskine failed, and the rest, who became nervous and confused when passing through a similar ordeal. The speech that Mr. Disraeli delivered on that memorable occasion is both clever and eloquent; even his most malignant biographer admits that it was far above the parliamentary average. The speech failed, not from the matter contained in it, but partly from an organized opposition and partly from the prejudices excited in the honest English mind by the attitudes and appearance of the speaker. When a suitor addresses a packed jury, and at the same time creates a feeling against him in the mind of the court, he is not likely to obtain a favourable verdict. This was Mr. Disraeli's position. The Irish who supported O'Connell—and who loved, and still love, whenever the occasion prompts, to introduce into the House of Commons the elements of a fair in their turbulent country—jeered and howled the moment Mr. Disraeli rose to his legs, and did their utmost to shriek him down. Nor did the

appearance of the young member create a favourable impression among the civilized portion of the assembly. In addressing an eminently English audience—an audience hating instinctively anything theatrical and foreign—Mr. Disraeli by his garments and his gestures at once repelled the sympathies of his hearers. He stood on the floor of the House showily dressed in a bottle-green frock coat, an extensive white waistcoat, trousers of a vulgar fancy pattern, and round his neck a black tie, which effectually concealed any collar he might have worn. A network of glittering chains covered the front of his chest. His face was deadly pale, and his hair, combed away from the right temple, fell in bunches of well-oiled ringlets over his left cheek. As he addressed his audience he spoke with great rapidity, moving his body from one side to another, and throwing his hands out, and then quickly drawing them in again. He looked like a sporting Israelite who had studied elocution on the boards of a third-rate French theatre.

The occasion of the speech was not a very important one. It appears that Mr. Spottiswoode, the queen's printer, had, during the recess, started a subscription to provide Protestant candidates with money to contest Irish constituencies, and also to supply funds for the prosecution of petitions against such Roman Catholic members as should be returned. The subscription was supported by several members of parliament, and among them by Sir Francis Burdett, who had taken every opportunity of informing the world that he had contributed twenty pounds. Such proceedings were warmly resented by the Irish, who looked upon the subscription as a conspiracy to suppress the political and religious liberties of Ireland. When parliament met, the matter came before the House. On December 7, 1837, Smith O'Brien, who had been returned for the county of Limerick, but whose seat had been petitioned against, moved that "a select committee be appointed to inquire into the allegations

contained in the petition presented by William Smith O'Brien, complaining of the subscriptions which had been raised to encourage the presentation of petitions against Irish members, and of the conduct of a member of the House in having contributed to such subscription." Lytton Bulwer supported the petition. Sir William Follett, the member for Exeter, defended the subscription on the ground that Smith O'Brien was as much a representative of the people of England as of the electors of Limerick. Sir Francis Burdett denounced O'Connell as encouraging assassination, and declared that there were many people living in Ireland under a system of terrorism "more powerful and dreadful than that which existed under Robespierre in France;" then he concluded with the charge that always struck home to the guilty conscience of the agitator, that he was making patriotism "a source of gain." O'Connell replied in a long speech, which fills several columns of "Hansard," attacking the Tories with his usual coarse vehemence, and accusing them of insulting the people of Ireland by this subscription. As soon as the tribune had sat down, Mr. Disraeli rose to his feet. He had vowed that they should "meet at Philippi," and the meeting had taken place. Extracts from the speech he delivered on that occasion have frequently been given, but it has seldom appeared in its entirety. Let the reader judge for himself whether it was the failure malice has represented it.

"I trust the House," he began, "will extend to me that gracious indulgence which is usually allowed to one who solicits its attention for the first time. I have, however, had sufficient experience of the critical spirit which pervades the House, to know and to feel how much I stand in need of that indulgence—an indulgence of which I will prove myself to be not unworthy, by promising not to abuse it.

"The hon. and learned member for Dublin (Mr. O'Connell) has taunted the hon. baronet, the member for North Wiltshire (Sir Francis Burdett) with having uttered a long, ram-

bling, wandering, jumbling speech. Now, I must say—and I can assure the hon. and learned gentleman that I paid the utmost attention to the remarks which flowed from him—that it seems to me that the hon. and learned gentleman took a hint from the hon. baronet in the oration which the hon. and learned gentleman has just addressed to the House. There is scarcely a single subject connected with Ireland which the hon. and learned member did not introduce into his rhetorical medley. The hon. and learned member for Dublin also taunted the hon. and learned member for Exeter (Sir W. Follett) with travelling out of the record of the present debate, while he himself travelled back seven hundred years, though the House is engaged in the discussion of events which have taken place within the last few months.

"The hon. and learned member has favoured the House with an allusion to poor laws for Ireland. [No, no.] Perhaps I may be wrong; but, at all events, there was an allusion to the Irish Corporation Bill. I do not pretend accurately to remember all the topics which the hon. and learned member introduced into his speech; but, if no reference was made by the hon. and learned gentleman to the subject of Irish poor laws, at least there was a dissertation upon the measure relating to the municipal corporations of Ireland. Is that subject relative to the debate before the House?

"I will not allude—I will spare the feelings of the hon. and learned member in that respect—to the subscriptions which the hon. and learned member told the House have not been successful on his side; but that circumstance may account for the bitterness with which he spoke of the successful efforts of the much-vilified Mr. Spottiswoode. I was, indeed, much inclined to ask the hon. member for Limerick (Mr. Smith O'Brien), if he attended the meeting at which it was expected that every Liberal member would subscribe £50 to the protection fund. I thought that perhaps the hon. member could have given some curious information upon that subject; that though there may have

been nearly £3000 to begin with, there is now nothing in the exchequer, and that this project of majestic mendicancy has now wholly vanished. The hon. and learned member for Dublin has announced that the Spottiswoode subscription is a Protestant subscription. That it is supported by many Protestants nobody can attempt to deny; but if the hon. and learned member means to say that it is a subscription established for the particular object of supporting a Protestant faction against the Catholic people, I beg to remark that I see nothing at all to justify that supposition. It may be a Protestant, but it is essentially a defensive fund. The hon. and learned member for Dublin talked of the clergymen of the Church of England subscribing to this fund, and contrasted their conduct with that of the priests of his church; but I defy the hon. and learned member to produce a single instance of tyrannical interference on the part of the Protestant clergy at all similar, or in the least degree analogous, to those acts which are imputed to the clergy of the Catholic church. If the hon. and learned member doubts what I am saying, let him refer to the volume of evidence taken before the intimidation committee, and the hon. member will see that from Cornwall to Yorkshire no case has occurred that bears a comparison to the occurrences in Ireland, and that I am fully justified in the statements I make. The object of the subscription entered into was to procure justice for the Protestant constituencies and the Protestant proprietors of Ireland, those constituencies and those proprietors being unable to obtain justice single-handed.

"Hon. members know very well that a landlord in Ireland has been told by his tenants that they could not vote for him because their priest had denounced him from their altar. They know very well that when it was attempted to reinforce the strength of the Protestant constituency in the registration courts, some revising or assistant barrister from the Castle of Dublin was easily found to baffle it, and thus they

were forced on to their last resource and refuge—to a committee of this House.

"Now, is this a petition which has the downfall of the Catholics for its object? For my part, I think that the facts which have been brought before the notice of the intimidation committee perfectly justify the use of the epithets which have been employed in the original circular or manifesto of Mr. Spottiswoode. [Murmurs.]

"I shall not trouble the House at any length. I do not affect to be insensible to the difficulty of my position, and I shall be very glad to receive indulgence even from the hon. members opposite. If, however, hon. gentlemen do not wish to hear me, I will sit down without a murmur.

"I shall confine myself to an attempt to bring back the subject to the point which is really at issue. I cannot comprehend why a considerable body of Her Majesty's subjects, respectable not only for their numbers, but for their independence and integrity, should be held up to scorn and odium by the hon. and learned member for Dublin, for the commission of an act, the legality of which he did not presume to question, of the propriety of which they are as competent judges as that hon. and learned member, and of which, after what he has himself confessed, the hon. and learned member ought to be the last to question the delicacy. I have examined the list of contributors as well as the hon. and learned member for Dublin, and with a more than ordinary degree of interest, arising from the fact that the town which I represent has contributed a larger proportion of the fund than any other part of England, and I do not find that the subscribers principally consist of members of the aristocracy. With very few exceptions, they are to be found among the middle classes—men of moderate opinions and of a temperate tone of mind—men, in fact, who seldom step out of the sphere of their private virtues—men, as hon. gentlemen who have examined these lists must know, who seldom partake of the excitement created by the conflict of parties, and

are rarely inflamed by the passions which agitate the political world. I must say that I think it a very strange thing that so large a body of individuals, many of whom are constitutional reformers, many of whom, until very lately, supported Her Majesty's government—I must repeat that I consider it would be very hard, very unjust, very impolitic, to appoint a committee of inquiry, which would be equivalent to a verdict against these individuals, without first inquiring what were the feelings which induced them to pursue the line of conduct they have adopted. I would remind the House that these individuals, many of whom supported the Reform Bill, may have entertained hopes in reference to the working of that measure, which, like the hopes cherished by some hon. gentlemen opposite, may have been disappointed. They may have entertained an expectation that nomination would be at an end, that the stain of borough-mongering would be wiped out, and that not a remnant of the system would remain in a reformed parliament. But when they found that the stain of borough-mongering assumed a deeper and darker hue, that seats were openly bought and sold, and that a system of intimidation was organized, to which the riots that even under the old system exhibited the more flagrant features of electoral operations, were peaceable—when they found that this was the case, they perhaps thought that it was time to bring matters to a head.

"I have but one more observation to make, and I confess I am rather anxious to make that observation, as it will give me the first opportunity which has been afforded me of saying something with respect to Her Majesty's government. [Renewed murmurs.]

"I wish I could induce the House to give me five minutes. It is not much. I stand here to-night, not formally, but in some degree virtually, as the representative of a considerable number of members of Parliament. [Loud laughter.]

"Now, why smile? Why envy me? Why not let me enjoy that reflection, if

only for one night? Do you forget that band of 158 new members, that ingenuous and inexperienced band, to whose unsophisticated minds the right hon. the chancellor of the exchequer (Mr. Spring Rice) addressed himself early in the session, in those dulcet tones of winning pathos which have proved so effective?

"I know that considerable misconception exists in the minds of many of that class of members on the opposition side of the House in reference to the conduct of Her Majesty's government with respect to elections. I will not taunt the noble lord opposite with the opinions which are avowed by his immediate followers; but certain views were entertained and certain calculations were made with respect to those elections about the time when the bell of our cathedral announced the death of our monarch. We had all then heard of the projects said to be entertained by the government, and a little accurate information on the subject would be very acceptable, particularly to the new members on the opposition side of the House. We had been told that reaction was a discovery that only awoke derision, that the grave of Toryism was dug, and that the funeral obsequies of Toryism might be celebrated without any fear of its resuscitation, that the much-vilified Peel parliament was blown to the winds, when Mr. Hudson rushed into the chambers of the Vatican.

"I do not impute these sanguine views to the noble lord himself, for he has subsequently favoured the public with a manifesto, from which it would appear that Toryism cannot be so easily defeated. It was, however, vaunted that there would be a majority of one hundred, which might, upon great occasions, be expanded to 125 or 130. [*Uproar and cries of 'Question.'*] That was the question. We wish to know the simple fact whether, with that majority in the distance, they then thought of an alteration in the Grenville Act,* and whether

* The principle of the Grenville Act was to select committees for the trial of election petitions by lot.

it was then supposed that impartial tribunals might be obtained for the trial of election petitions. [Renewed murmurs.]

"If hon. gentlemen think this fair, I will submit. I would not do so to others, that is all. [Laughter.] Nothing is so easy as to laugh. I wish before I sit down to show the House clearly their position.

"When the House remembers that, in spite of the support of the hon. and learned member for Dublin and his well-disciplined band of patriots, there was a little shyness exhibited by former supporters of Her Majesty's government—when they recollect the 'new loves' and the 'old loves,' in which so much of passion and recrimination was mixed up, between the noble Tityrus of the treasury bench and the learned Daphne of Liskeard (Mr. Charles Buller), notwithstanding the *amantium iræ* has resulted, as I had always expected, in the *amoris integratio*, notwithstanding that political duel has been fought, in which more than one shot was interchanged, but in which recourse was had to the secure arbitrament of blank cartridges—notwithstanding emancipated Ireland and enslaved England, the noble lord might wave in one hand the keys of St. Peter, and in the other—[the shouts that followed drowned the conclusion of the sentence.]

"Now, Mr. Speaker, see the philosophical prejudice of man. I would certainly gladly hear a cheer, even though it came from the lips of a political opponent. I am not at all surprised at the reception which I have experienced. I have begun several times many things, and I have often succeeded at last. I will sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me."

With regard to this memorable prophecy, so brilliantly realized, it has been well remarked that—"To think this and say it next day would have been nothing. To say so, not so much in the petulance of temper as with the calm earnestness of conviction, at a moment when most men would have been crushed helplessly under the load of ridicule, and stung beyond power of reflex-

tion by the disappointment of cherished hopes, gave evidence of unexampled strength of will and presence of mind, and of the overweening self-confidence it went so far to justify."

On Canning resuming his seat, after having failed to impress the House in his maiden speech, he was advised by his friend, Mr. Pitt, to remain silent for some sessions until he had made himself perfectly familiar with the intellectual atmosphere of the House of Commons, so as to know, the next time he took part in debate, how to speak and what to avoid. Mr. Disraeli did not act upon this principle. During the next few years his name is to be met with in the pages of Hansard, not frequently but sufficiently often to show that he maintained consistently the political views he always held, and that he had now obtained the ear of his audience. Whilst speaking he was often encouraged by the approval of Sir Robert Peel, and on one occasion he succeeded in obtaining a loud "Hear, hear!" not uttered in irony, from his virulent enemy, O'Connell. Let us rake up from the past the opinions he expressed before the name of Disraeli was among the most prominent of the orators of his day. When Mr. Villiers made his annual motion on the corn laws (March 15, 1838), we find him contradicting the statement that the existence of the corn laws exposed English manufactures to unfair competition. As became a man of letters, he supported (April 25, 1838) Sergeant Talfourd's bill to amend the law of copyright, and urging the claims of authors upon the state to have their works protected. Upon the House resolving itself into committee on the Irish Municipal Corporations Bill (June 1, 1838), he protested against the tendency to centralization by which it was characterized, and on the bill collapsing, the government, later on in the session, brought in a new measure, which Mr. Disraeli denounced as "a most profligate one." He spoke, with much humour and liberality of sentiment, in favour of the

motion of Mr. Duncombe (Feb. 28, 1839) respecting theatrical entertainments in the city of Westminster during the season of Lent. It appears that it was the inconsistent and intolerant custom, whilst theatrical representations might take place in the other parts of the metropolis, to forbid them in Westminster during the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent. Mr. Duncombe very properly argued that if it were wrong to go to theatres on the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, in the city of Westminster, it was equally wrong to watch theatrical performances on the same days during the same season in the other parts of London which were not under the jurisdiction of the city of Westminster. He complained of the pecuniary loss sustained by actors and actresses, and mildly inquired, if the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent were so very sacred, why the bishops gave dinners, and went out to dinner, on those holy days?

Mr. Disraeli followed suit. He hoped, he said, that he entertained as profound a respect for the established religion of the country as any one on the episcopal bench; but when the House was met upon a question of this nature, it was necessary to indulge in a little research. He wished to know at what time during the Protestant sway in this country Lent had been rigidly and properly respected. He was not prepared to say that he approved of any relaxation of a rigid observance of Lent so far as Wednesdays and Fridays were concerned. He was not prepared to say that it might not be just, and expedient, and prudent, and religious, and proper to observe it even for forty days. But then they must give him forty days of Lent as they had ever been observed when they were perfectly observed—they must give him the forty days of Lent, with the "mysteries" and with the "moralities:" with those mysteries and with those moralities which were acted by the monks. This was the only mode in which humanity had tolerated the religious observance of Lent, and these were the amusements

to which the people then had recourse. Nor should we forget that the birth of Protestantism and of the drama in England were almost simultaneous. The moment Protestantism had sway in England there was a great relaxation in the observance of Lent—in fact, it had never been observed rigidly and completely in Protestant times. And besides, he must say, that the question of the observance of Lent on two days in the week, without an equal observance of good morals and manners in other respects, was but the shadow of a custom, and the shade of a faith. Holding these views, he would certainly vote for the motion.

A few days afterwards (March 8, 1839), the Irish Municipal Corporations Bill came again before the House. Mr. Disraeli opposed it, objecting, as he had before, to its centralization, and declaring that if its clauses became law the rights and liberties of Ireland could never be assured. It was on this occasion that O'Connell loudly cried approvingly "Hear, hear!" The young member for Maidstone spoke at greater length when he expressed his intention to vote against Mr. Hume's motion for household suffrage (March 21, 1839). He now, for the first time, treated the House to the views he had laid down in his "Vindication of the English Constitution." Mr. Hume, in the advocacy of his cause, had spoken much of "the people" who, of course, were strongly in favour of the measure, and he had also declared that taxation and representation ought to go hand in hand. Mr. Disraeli differed from the great economist. The constitution of England, he said, consisted of three estates of the realm, and the commons of England formed one of those estates. If the elective body in the country were to be an estate of the realm, it would be absurd to have a House of Commons to represent the volition of the nation. And pray, he asked, what was to be understood by "the people?" They knew what "a nation" was, but what was meant by "a people?" The phrase "people" was not a political phrase, but a term of natural history, a physiological term. The

House of Commons was the representative not of "the people," but of the commons of England. It had been said in the course of this debate that the theory of their constitution was that taxation and representation should go hand in hand. Where was that principle to be found? In what part of the constitution? In Magna Charta, in the Bill of Rights, or in the famous Reform Bill which was welcomed with so much enthusiasm, and was now attacked with so much causticity? The principle of representation did not necessarily include election, as there might be both representation without election and election without representation. The Church of England was represented in the House of Lords—there was representation without election, for the bishops were not elected by the clergy. The House of Lords was as much a representative body as the House of Commons, but that House was not elected. If taxation and representation went hand in hand, then indirect taxation gave as good a claim to representation as direct taxation. If direct taxation was a qualification for the exercise of the elective franchise, then why should not indirect taxation, and why should they stop at household suffrage? It had been said that the progress of education and general enlightenment would qualify the whole male population for the exercise of the elective franchise. But how did they not know, he asked the House, that the progress of this very enlightenment would inspire the population with a desire to reject the representative system altogether, and resort to the Prussian policy of government, by which there was no suffrage given at all, but every man was preferred in the state according to his merits? He could not support the motion.

He took the same course when the education question (June 20, 1839) came before the House. He made a distinction between "national education" and "state education;" the one he approved of, the other he was opposed to. He was not in favour of paternal government, which stamped out the

sense of independence in man, and caused him to rely upon others. Individual effort should be encouraged, but aid from the state discouraged. It was the longest speech he had as yet made in the House of Commons, and will bear being taken out of the oblivion of Hansard.

He objected, he said, that education should be carried on under the superintendence, the interference, and the control of the state. When he came to examine facts, he found that education did not owe much to the interference of the state. It appeared to him that the state had done little or nothing, and that nearly all that had been done had been effected by public aid and individual enterprise. The state in this country had not formed a single road, built a single bridge, or dug a single canal. Society should be strong, but the state weak. To diminish the duties of the citizen was to peril the rights of the subject. He ascribed to these principles the realization in this country of the two greatest blessings of social life—liberty and order. A despotic government might insure order; a republic might afford liberty; but the combination of liberty and of order—order not disturbed by national injustice, and liberty not disturbed by popular outrage—had been realized in England alone. The chief characteristics of the English people had long been known as independence, self-reliance, caution, and enterprise; and these they owed to their system of self-government. But it was now wished to return to that system of society which was an indication of a barbarous age, but which had gained for itself the epithet of "paternal." Wherever they found a paternal government they found a state education. Take China, take Persia, take Austria—the China of Europe—take Prussia—the equivalent of Persia—and there it would be seen that the most perfect systems of national education were to be found. Yet where everything was left to the government, the subject became a machine. He therefore opposed the system on account of its tendency to injure

their national character. He was an advocate for national education, but it did not follow that he should also be an advocate for state education—there was a great distinction between the two. Was it true that education had been so neglected as had been alleged? Had the cellar schools in their great manufacturing towns done nothing? Had the church done nothing? He regretted that so important a measure had been brought forward at the close of the session, and that the experience and patriotism of the House of Lords had not been consulted in the matter. He would vote against the bill. "I believe," he concluded, "the great object which every English statesman ought to have in view is—to encourage the habits of self-government amongst the people; and it is because I consider the proposition which has been submitted to our consideration as hostile to the acquisition of those habits that I oppose the scheme. I believe that it is an axiom in civil policy, that in exact proportion as we curtail the duties of citizens, we peril the rights of subjects; and I believe we have done that already to some extent. We have already had recourse to a system of central organization; and what has that system not produced? and what may it not yet produce? Let us remember that the same system which tyrannized in the nursery under the pretence of education, may again make its appearance, and immure old age within hated walls, under the specious plea of affording relief. It is always the state and never society—always machinery and never sympathy. By our system of state education all would be thrown into the same mint, and all would come out with the same impress and superintcription. We may have a bloated mechanical prosperity; we may make money; we may make railroads; but when the age of passion comes, when those interests are in motion, and those feelings stirring, which will shake society to its centre—then we shall see what will become of the votaries of state education! We shall then see

whether the people have received the same sort of education which was advocated and supported so nobly by William of Wykeham: by him who built schools, and founded and endowed colleges. Who, I would ask, built our universities? Did they spring from a 'system of central organization?' Who built our colleges, churches, and cathedrals? Do we owe them to a scheme of 'centralization' propounded and supported by the state? No; other principles actuated the men of former days; and let us look abroad on Ireland, and witness the result. Where shall we find a country more elevated in the social scale? Where a people more distinguished for all that is excellent in the human character? The time will come, if you persist in your present course, when you will find that you have revolutionized the English character; and when that is effected, you can no longer expect English achievements."

These remarks are more original than sound, and we are glad to think that within recent years they have not been acted upon. We have adopted the system of state education without it having altered the English character, except for the better, and without it being calculated to endanger English achievements in the future. In spite of Mr. Disraeli's objections to centralization, the system was no novelty. Our universities established a central system of education. It was found expedient to centralize justice, why, then, should it have been pernicious to centralize education? Nor was the example of China a happy one in favour of Mr. Disraeli's arguments. Whatever evils the Chinese empire labours under, it certainly owes a deep debt of gratitude to its system of education; through it the democracy in the country has found a vent; and hence has preserved the empire from many of those convulsions which have distracted Europe. The speech of the member of Maidstone on this occasion is valuable, since it shows how keenly he appreciated the English character, and how stoutly he opposed any measure which, in his eyes, was calcu-

lated to destroy the manliness of the people he so much admired, and to lower the prestige of the country of his adoption. A modern bishop has said that he would sooner see his countrymen drunk than enslaved. Mr. Disraeli preferred to see Englishmen ignorant rather than lose the majesty of their self-reliance. Happily, we have arranged matters so that knowledge can be circulated without loss to the sense of independence in the individual or danger to the future of the community.

Events were now stirring which caused Mr. Disraeli to divert his attention for the moment from parliamentary to the wider field of national criticism. The years that succeeded the passing of the Reform Bill were years of increasing agricultural distress and commercial depression. The Englishman who, at the present day, studies the condition of the working classes—the hours of labour controlled by the state, the restrictions placed upon the employment of women and children, an ameliorated poor-law system, the development of education, the advantages derived from cheap travelling and cheap correspondence, the abolition of odious imposts and slave-driving barbarities, and the rest—cannot but at once perceive how superior is the position of the labouring man in every respect to that which was the lot of his predecessors. Beneath the sway of the Melbourne government nothing could be more piteous or revolting than the situation in which the lower orders found themselves. In the mines, young women half clad in coarse sacking, unsexed and diseased, worked like beasts chained to the cars they had to drag along from subterranean passage to passage until death relieved them from the miserable burden of their existence. Boys as soon as they could walk were employed in all kinds of labour, which stunted their growth and poisoned their manhood. The peasant received wages which, even with the aid of out-door relief, scarcely kept body and soul together; whilst the home in which he was lodged, damp and dilapidated, was

scarcely ever put in repair by his landlord. The hard, selfish Lord Marney in Mr. Disraeli's touching novel of "Sybil"—a work which contains the best description we have of the condition of the working classes at this time—was no exaggerated type of many a country landowner, and of the light in which the tenantry were regarded.

"We have nothing to complain of," said Lord Marney. "We continue reducing the rates, and as long as we do that the country must improve. The workhouse test tells. We had the other day a case of incendiarism, which frightened some people; but I inquired into it, and am quite satisfied it originated in purely accidental circumstances; at least nothing to do with wages. I ought to be a judge, for it was on my own property."

"And what is the rate of wages in your part of the world, Lord Marney?" inquired Mr. St. Lys, who was standing by.

"Oh! good enough: not like your manufacturing districts; but people who work in the open air instead of a furnace can't expect, and don't require such. They get their eight shillings a week; at least generally."

"Eight shillings a week!" said Mr. St. Lys. "Can a labouring man with a family, perhaps of eight children, live on eight shillings a week?"

"Oh! as for that," said Lord Marney, "they get more than that, because there is beer-money allowed, at least to a great extent among us, though I for one do not approve of the practice, and that makes nearly a shilling per week additional; and then some of them have potato grounds, though I am entirely opposed to that system."

"And yet," said Mr. St. Lys, "how they contrive to live is to me marvellous."

"Oh! as for that," said Lord Marney, "I have generally found the higher the wages the worse the workman. They only spend their money in the beer-shops. *They* are the curse of this country."

"But what is a poor man to do," said Mr. St. Lys, "after his day's work, if he returns to his own roof and finds no home; his fire extinguished, his food unprepared; the partner of his life, wearied with labour in the field or the factory, still absent, or perhaps in bed from exhaustion, or because she has returned wet to the skin, and has no change of raiment for her relief? We have removed woman from her sphere; we may have reduced wages by her introduction into the market of labour; but under these circumstances what we call domestic life is a condition impossible to be realized for the people of this country; and we must not therefore

be surprised that they seek solace or rather refuge in the beer-shop.'

Lord Marney looked up at Mr. St. Lys with a stare of high-bred impertinence, and then carelessly observed, without directing his words to him, 'They may say what they like, but it is all an affair of population.'

'I would rather believe that it is an affair of resources,' said Mr. St. Lys; 'not what is the amount of our population, but what is the amount of our resources for their maintenance.'

'It comes to the same thing,' said Lord Marney. 'Nothing can put this country right but emigration on a great scale; and as the government do not choose to undertake it, I have commenced it for my own defence on a small scale. I will take care that the population of my parishes is not increased. I build no cottages, and I destroy all I can; and I am not ashamed or afraid to say so.'

Landlords of the Marney class, acting upon this principle, forced the people they expelled from their cottages to flock to the neighbouring towns for shelter. Here, in the miserable tenements they were obliged to occupy, their condition was even worse than in the ricketty hovels in the fields from which they had been driven. We quote again from the author of "*Sybil*":—

"These wretched tenements seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering. With the water streaming down the walls, the light distinguished through the roof, with no hearth even in winter, the virtuous mother in the sacred pangs of childbirth gives forth another victim to our thoughtless civilization; surrounded by three generations whose inevitable presence is more painful than her sufferings in that hour of travail; while the father of her coming child, in another corner of the sordid chamber, lies stricken by that typhus which his contaminating dwelling has breathed into his veins, and for whose next prey is perhaps destined his new-born child. These swarming walls had neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun, or supply the means of ventilation; the humid and putrid roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter. The dwelling-rooms were neither boarded nor paved; and whether it were that some were situate in low and damp places, occasionally flooded by the river, and usually much below the level of the road; or that the springs, as was often the case, would burst through the mud floor; the ground was at no time better than so much clay, while sometimes

you might see little channels cut from the centre under the doorways to carry off the water, the door itself removed from its hinges; a resting-place for infancy in its deluged home. These hovels were in many instances not provided with the commonest conveniences of the rudest police; contiguous to every door might be observed the dung-heap on which every kind of filth was accumulated, for the purpose of being disposed of for manure, so that, when the poor man opened his narrow habitation in the hope of refreshing it with the breeze of summer, he was met with a mixture of gases from reeking dunghills."

Nor was the operative a whit better off or better cared for than the peasant. He was seldom paid more than a penny an hour, and of this wretched sum he had at the end of the work to accept a portion of it in kind. The truck system was in full force, and the employer, who was often the owner of the stores at which the working man had to deal, not only paid his victim in victuals and groceries, but made him purchase those necessaries of life at an exorbitant rate. "This here age," says Master Nixon in "*Sybil*," "wants a great deal, but what it principally wants is to have its wages paid in the current coin of the realm;" and he expressed the sentiments of his class. Slowly but gradually this state of things rose from murmuring and discontent into open sedition. The poor man saw the capitalist rolling in wealth, whilst he, the labourer, was doomed to a life of the heaviest toil and bitterest misery. He made war upon his employer. If he was a peasant, he burnt his landlord's ricks; if he was a mechanic, he smashed the machinery. He paid heed to the evil counsels of the agitator who went stumping the country, setting class against class, and sowing broadcast the seeds of sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion. The English people were then, as Mr. Disraeli said, divided into two nations. "Two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are

formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws—the rich and the poor."

But it was against the operation of the new poor laws that the hostility of the lower classes was especially directed. By the suppression of the monasteries the chief support of vagrant mendicity was withdrawn; and ever since that date statute after statute had been passed with the object of dealing with the vexed question of pauper relief, and settling it upon some merciful yet repressive basis. The various acts—the acts of Elizabeth, of Charles the Second, of George the First, Davies Gilbert's Act, the Select Vestry Act, and others—had, however, failed in effectually checking imposture, or in relieving real distress. "The industrial population of the whole country," writes Sir Erskine May, "was being rapidly reduced to pauperism, while property was threatened with no distant ruin. The system which was working this mischief assumed to be founded upon benevolence; but no evil genius could have designed a scheme of greater malignity for the corruption of the human race. The fund intended for the relief of want and sickness—of age and impotence—was recklessly distributed to all who begged a share. Everyone was taught to look to the parish, and not to his own honest industry, for support. The idle clown, without work, fared as well as the industrious labourer who toiled from morn till night. The shameless slut, with half a dozen children, the progeny of many fathers, was provided for as liberally as the destitute widow and her orphans. But worse than this, independent labourers were tempted and seduced into the degraded ranks of pauperism, by payments freely made in aid of wages. Cottage rents were paid, and allowances given according to the number of a family. Hence thrift, self-denial, and honest independence were discouraged. The manly farm labourer, who scorned to ask for alms, found his own wages artificially lowered, while improvi-

dence was cherished and rewarded by the parish. He could barely live, without incumbrance; but boys and girls were hastening to church, without a thought of the morrow; and rearing new broods of paupers, to be maintained by the overseer. Who can wonder that labourers were rapidly sinking into pauperism, without pride or self-respect? But the evil did not even rest here. Paupers were actually driving other labourers out of employment—the labour being preferred which was partly paid out of rates, to which employers were forced to contribute. As the cost of pauperism, thus encouraged, was increasing, the poorer rate-payers were themselves reduced to poverty. The soil was ill-cultivated by pauper labour, and its rental consumed by parish rates. In a period of fifty years the poor-rates were quadrupled, and had reached, in 1833, the enormous amount of £8,600,000. In many parishes they were approaching the annual value of the land itself."

Government at last resolved to inquire into the matter, and accordingly in the year 1834, on the recommendation of a royal commission, appointed at the request of parliament to examine into the administration of the laws relating to the poor, the important Poor Law Amendment Act was passed. The essence of this measure was contained in two leading provisions. The first of these placed the superintendence of the whole machinery for dispensing relief to the poor in the hands of a central body of three commissioners, whilst the second contemplated the combination of a number of parishes into a so-called union, which henceforward became the unit of area of poor-law management. The great objects of the measure were those upon which the act of Elizabeth, to limit relief to destitution, and to distinguish between want and imposture, had been based. To arrive at these conclusions, the test was to be found in the workhouse. Under the old system pauperism had been generally relieved at home—the parish workhouse being only looked upon as the asylum for

the aged, for orphans, and for those whom it suited better than out-door relief. However, now out-door relief was withdrawn altogether from the able-bodied paupers, whose wants were to be tested by their willingness to enter the parish workhouse. As soon as the harshness of these proceedings began to be practically felt, a fierce outcry against the act was raised by the lower orders. The poor man, reduced by sickness or misfortune to demand help from the parish to tide him over temporary distress, pleaded in vain for the out-door relief which kept his home together and mitigated his sufferings. If he were to become the recipient of parochial assistance, a crushing future stood before him. He had to break up his humble establishment, to part with his household goods, to enter a prison-like asylum called the workhouse, to be cruelly separated from his wife and children, to wear a hideous dress, to be subject to severe restrictions upon his personal liberty, to do hard work, to be half fed, and, sad and wearied, to lie down to rest and breathe a tainted atmosphere in a crowded cell. We cannot be surprised that the labouring man, reduced to poverty from no fault of his own, with the instincts of affection in his nature, and not wholly lost to the sense of self-respect, should have declined to seek the shelter offered him on such terrible terms. Rather than be separated from those he loved, and be treated as a convict in order to obtain bare sustenance, he preferred to perish from want. He refused to "enter the House;" and death from starvation was often the consequence of his refusal.

When misery has marked the lower orders for its own, the professional agitator generally appears upon the scene to attack the existing government and show how grievances can be redressed. A few weeks after the coronation of the young queen a great Radical meeting was held in Birmingham, and Chartist sprang into life and made its mischievous influence felt. The country was in a sore plight; trade was

bad, the farming interest was crushed by a succession of bad harvests, the poor were under-paid and over-worked. All these evils, it was now suggested, were owing to the working classes not being properly represented in the legislature. The recent Reform Bill had abolished various nomination-boroughs; had conferred the right of returning members on several large and prosperous towns; had introduced a ten-pound household qualification for boroughs, and had extended the county franchise to leaseholders and copy-holders; but had done nothing for the working classes. It admitted the middle class to the representation, but it declined to go any lower in the social scale. Since the working men had been mainly instrumental in creating the agitation which caused the Reform Bill to be carried, their exclusion from the benefit of its clauses excited considerable indignation and discontent. The people banded themselves together and gave public expression to their feelings. They drew up a programme of their wants, and showed it to O'Connell. He approved of it. "There's your charter," he said; "agitate for it, and never be content with anything less." The title given was a good one, and henceforth the programme of the lower classes was called the "People's Charter," and those who advocated its contents went by the name of Chartists. It cannot be said that the demands were very exorbitant. The masses asked for universal suffrage, for annual parliaments, for vote by ballot, for the abolition of the property qualification then required for election of a member to Parliament, for the payment of members, and for the division of the country into equal electoral districts. These were the famous "six points" so familiar to all who have studied the agitation of this time. The Chartists used all their efforts to carry out their programme. They started newspapers of their own to advance their cause; they petitioned parliament; they broke out into open revolt; they held seditious meetings; they encouraged strikes; and on one memorable

occasion their leaders were tried for high treason. For ten years the agitation continued, and then it died a natural death.

Mr. Disraeli had always, from the very beginning of his parliamentary career to the day when he breathed his last in Curzon Street, taken a keen interest in the welfare of the working classes. He held that between the aristocracy and the lower orders there was far more of sympathy than between either the aristocracy and the middle classes, or the middle classes and the working men; and it was one of the great objects of the political creed he professed, to heighten and strengthen this sympathy. Whenever an opportunity occurred, no matter how his conduct affected party interests, his vote was ever registered in favour of the comfort and prosperity of the people. Like Lord Palmerston in his later years, he wanted the working classes to enjoy themselves; and every measure which tended in a judicious and legitimate manner to further such enjoyment he strenuously advocated, both when he was an unknown member of parliament as when he was a responsible minister of state. He went into the lobby against Sir Robert Peel on the question of the Notting Hill Footway Bill, asserting that wherever private privilege, however ancient, stood between the toiling multitudes and the boon of fresh air and harmless recreation, private privilege ought to yield gracefully its exclusive rights. He was not in favour of making the observance of the Sabbath so strict and Puritan-like as to militate against the innocent pleasures and amusements of the people, who work arduously six days out of every seven. He was always an advocate of a sound sanitary system to be adopted in the dwellings of the poor. Whilst the professed champions of the working classes—Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright—held aloof from the philanthropic efforts of Lord Ashley, now Lord Shaftesbury, to limit the hours of labour in factories, and to protect women and children from over-work in mines, it was Mr. Disraeli who was one of the steadiest of

that kind-hearted peer's supporters. Influenced by these generous sympathies, when Mr. Attwood, the member for Birmingham, came forward in the House of Commons to present the national petition of the Chartist, Mr. Disraeli was not ashamed to express himself in kindly terms of the objects those misguided men had in view. Lord John Russell, in his most acidulated manner, had sneered at the charter and its advocates, whereupon Mr. Disraeli rose up to reply. He, too, disapproved, he said, of the charter as a remedy for the grievances complained of, but he candidly admitted that his sympathies were not wholly withheld from the petitioners. The complaints they brought forward were not groundless; recent legislation had been against them and their order; and sooner or later the working classes would have to be admitted to a larger share in the management of the affairs of the country than they then possessed. Those who, criticising the Reform Bill of 1867, accuse Mr. Disraeli of inconsistency, will do well to ponder upon this extract from the speech he delivered on the occasion of the Chartist petition in the summer of 1839:—

"If the noble lord," (Lord John Russell), he said, "supposed that, in this country, he could establish a permanent government in what was styled now-a-days a monarchy of the middle classes, he would be indulging a great delusion, which, if persisted in, must shake our institutions and endanger the throne. He believed such a system was actually foreign to the character of the people of England. He believed that in this country the exercise of political power must be associated with great public duties. That was the true principle to adhere to. In proportion as they departed from it they were wrong; as they kept by it they would approximate to that lofty state of things which had been described as so desirable by the honourable member for Birmingham. The noble lord had answered the honourable member for Birmingham, but he had not answered the Chartist. The honour-

able member for Birmingham had made a very dexterous speech, a skilful evolution, in favour of the middle classes; but although he had attempted to dovetail the charter on the Birmingham union, all that had recently taken place on the appearance of the Chartists before the leaders of the union—newly-created magistrates—and the speeches by members of the convention within the last few days—led to a different conclusion—they manifested the greatest hostility to the middle classes. They (the working men) made no attack on the aristocracy, none on the corn laws—but upon the newly enfranchised constituency, not on the old—upon that peculiar constituency which was the basis of the noble lord's government."

However, the reign of the Melbourne government was rapidly drawing to a close. The blunders it had committed and the grievances that clamoured for redress were fast undermining whatever of stability it had possessed. The Jamaica question gave it the finishing blow. Owing to quarrels in the island, Lord Melbourne had resolved on proposing to parliament a suspension of the constitution of Jamaica for five years, during which period the affairs of the colony were to be administered by a provisional government. The proposal was opposed not only by Sir Robert Peel and his followers, but by numerous Radicals, as a violation of Liberal principles. The ministry carried the second reading of their bill by five votes. Such a victory was virtually a defeat, and Lord Melbourne resigned. We know what followed. Sir Robert was sent for, but declined to form an administration on the refusal of the queen to part with certain Whig ladies, 'the friends of her youth,' who held posts in the household. The "Bedchamber Plot," as it was called, restored Lord Melbourne to power, and once more he was

"To make believe to guide the realm
Without a hand upon the helm."

In the opinion of Mr. Disraeli, Sir Robert Peel was wrong in not taking office in 1839. "His withdrawal," he writes, "seems to have

been a mistake. In the great heat of parliamentary faction which had prevailed since 1831, the royal prerogative which, unfortunately for the rights and liberties and social welfare of the people, had since 1688 been more or less oppressed, had waned fainter and fainter. A youthful princess on the throne, whose appearance touched the imagination, and to whom her people were generally inclined to ascribe something of that decision of character which becomes those born to command, offered a favourable opportunity to restore the exercise of that regal authority, the usurpation of whose functions has entailed on the people of England so much suffering and so much degradation. It was unfortunate that one who, if any, should have occupied the proud and national position of the leader of the Tory party, the chief of the people, and the champion of the throne, should have commenced his career as minister under Victoria by an unseemly contrariety to the personal wishes of the queen. The reaction of public opinion, disgusted with years of parliamentary tumult and the incoherence of party legislation; the balanced state in the kingdom of political parties themselves; the personal character of the sovereign—these were all causes which intimated that a movement in favour of prerogative was at hand. The leader of the Tory party should have vindicated his natural position, and availed himself of the gracious occasion; he missed it; and, as the occasion was inevitable, the Whigs enjoyed its occurrence. And thus England witnessed for the first time the portentous anomaly of the oligarchical or Venetian party, which had in the old days destroyed the free monarchy of England, retaining power merely by favour of the court."

During the ensuing few months that Lord Melbourne's government was in office, the member for Maidstone was not silent. The pages of Hansard show us that he was often on his legs putting questions, supporting or opposing measures, and criticising in no toothless fashion the deeds of the Whigs

and the tenacity with which they clung to power. He sneered at the administration for claiming to be considered the government of the middle party, since it declared that it avoided all extremes. He disliked middle parties, for they reminded him, he said, of the lawyers who eat the oysters and gave the shells to their clients. He opposed Lord John Russell's motion for the establishment of district and county constabulary, objecting to the inquisitorial powers with which the new police would be furnished. He took the part of two men who were imprisoned for political offences, but whose confinement was carried out under exceptional circumstances of indignity and barbarity. He spoke against the agitation for the repeal of the corn laws, and he directed attention to the miserable state of the country generally. But his chief speech, during this period of ministerial incapacity, was in support of the motion of Sir Robert Peel. The ex-premier gave notice that, on May 31, he should move "That Her Majesty's ministers do not sufficiently possess the confidence of the House of Commons to enable them to carry through the House measures which they deem of essential importance to the public welfare, and that their continuance in office under such circumstances is at variance with the spirit of the constitution."

With this sentiment Mr. Disraeli cordially agreed. He began by passing a high eulogium upon the character of Sir Robert Peel "Placed," he said, "in an age of rapid civilization and rapid transition, he has adapted the practical character of his measures to the condition of the times. When in power, he has never proposed a change which he did not carry; and when in opposition, he never forgot that he was at the head of the Conservative party. He has never employed his influence for factious purposes, and has never been stimulated in his exertions by a disordered desire of obtaining office; above all, he has never carried himself to the opposite benches by making propositions by which

he was not ready to abide. Whether in or out of office, the right hon. baronet has done his best to make the settlement of the new constitution of England work for the benefit of the present time and of posterity." He then showed how necessary it was that there should be a clear understanding between the representative and executive bodies. What, he asked, was the duty of a government placed in the situation of the present servants of the crown, unsupported as they were by a House of Commons elected under their own auspices? They had frequently been defeated in the House of Lords, and of late they had been frequently defeated in the House of Commons. Clearly it was their duty to bow before the feeling of the country, and resign. Their conduct was as mean as it was unconstitutional. "The reformed House of Commons," he said, "proud of its new-fangled existence, and believing that all power would centre in itself, permitted a minister of state to stigmatize a vote of the House of Lords as 'the whisper of a faction.' But now the poisoned chalice is returned to their own lips. Those who have treated the House of Lords with insult are now treating the House of Commons with contempt. The fact is, that the government is too full of that specious Liberalism which they find it convenient periodically to assume; but in attacking aristocratic institutions, it has become the victim of a haughty and rapacious oligarchy. The present is not the first time the Whigs have been placed in this situation, and in the present day they have been obliged to reconstruct the House of Commons, and to conciliate the House of Lords. In one thing they have been consistent—in a systematic slight of our parliamentary institutions. They now govern the country, not only in spite of the House of Lords, but in spite of the House of Commons. What will be the consequence? Is it possible that these 'apostles of liberty,' as they have been termed, should be found cringing in the antechambers of the palace, and that they now intend to support them-

selves in office by clandestine and back-stairs' influence? The career of Her Majesty's present servants has been a singular one; they began by remodelling the House of Commons and insulting the House of Lords; then they assaulted the church; next the colonial constitutions; afterwards they assailed the municipalities of the kingdom, attacked the rich and the poor, and now, in their last moments, at one fell swoop, make war upon the colonial, commercial, and agricultural interests. Under these circumstances, I see no reason why the party to which I belong should despair, and the right hon. baronet (Sir Robert Peel), who, according to the president of the Board of Control,* is not a great man, and cannot be a great minister, may have the opportunity of establishing a government which will have the confidence of the education, the property, and, I sincerely believe, the enlightened feeling of the great body of the nation. In that case the prophecy of the right hon. gentleman will be falsified." The motion of Sir Robert Peel was carried by a majority of *one*, the ayes being 312 and the noes 311. Instead of resigning, the government preferred to appeal to the country. Parliament was dissolved, and soon every shire was busy with the confusion and party hate of a general election.

We must now allude to an event which, strictly speaking, has no place in a political biography, yet, since it influenced in no slight manner the career of Mr. Disraeli, should not be omitted. Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the senior member for Maidstone, had died early in 1839, and in the autumn of the following year Mr. Disraeli married the widow of his late colleague. The lady was possessed of an ample fortune, and the union was so singularly happy as to make it remarkable even in this country, which has given a word to our language incapable of translation into a foreign tongue—the word *Home*. Nothing, we are told—and it

is no intrusion into the privacy of domesticity, for the fact was never a secret—was more charming or more complete than the devotion to each other, and the sympathy with each other, which existed between Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli. To his wife—to her advice as well as to her wealth—the late Lord Beaconsfield owed much, and he never scrupled openly to admit his acknowledgments. There are men, distinguished in the various worlds of politics, literature, art, science, and commerce, who, when they have attained to fame, quietly keep their wives in the background, and enjoy the hospitalities of the great and listen to the flatteries of society, unencumbered by the presence of their partners, who have patiently borne the toil and burden of obscurity, yet are not permitted to bathe in the sunshine of prosperity. Mr. Disraeli did not belong to this class. Where he went his wife went, and no purely social invitation was ever accepted which did not include her who was, in the most exhaustive sense of the word, his helpmeet. That the late leader of the Conservative party, both as Mr. Disraeli and as the Earl of Beaconsfield, was eminently a popular personage in society, is well known; his geniality, his wit, his tact, his homage to the presence and influence of woman, and above all the charms of his conversation, could not fail to render him an acquisition even to the most exclusive coteries; yet he owed not a little of his social popularity to the sweetness and purity of his home-life. Nor was he in this respect acting foreign to the instincts of the race whose blood coursed in his veins. Whatever faults the Jews possess, conjugal infidelity and a distaste for the repose and enjoyments of home are not amongst them; their religious ceremonies are so mixed up with the seclusion of family life—the home being, as it were, the completion of the synagogue—that they are of all people the most noted for the strength and purity of the domestic virtues. That these were apparent in Mr. Disraeli is plain to all who have studied

* Sir John Cam Hobhouse, then president of the Board of Control.

his career, or know anything of his life. On the publication of his pathetic novel, "Sybil," he dedicated the book to his wife in these terms:—"I would inscribe this work," he wrote, "to one whose noble spirit and gentle nature ever prompt her to sympathize with the suffering; to one whose sweet voice has often encouraged, and whose taste and judgment have ever guided, its pages; the most severe of critics, but—a perfect wife!"

On the resignation of his cabinet, in 1868, he sought no honours for himself; but he paid a graceful tribute to the woman he loved, by having her raised to the peerage as Viscountess Beaconsfield. In the debate on the address to Her Majesty, that a monument should be erected in Westminster Abbey to the memory of Lord Beaconsfield, allusion was made, in both houses of parliament, to the grace and devotion of the deceased statesman's married life. "He had," said Lord Malmesbury, who knew the ex-premier intimately—"He had every domestic virtue which a man need have. It was fortunate for him, as he always said, that he was supported by a most amiable and devoted wife, to whom he was himself equally devoted. I remember when at last he was deprived of the support of his wife, he said to me, with tears in his eyes, 'I hope some of my friends will take notice of me now in my great misfortune, for I have no home; and when I tell my coachman to drive home, I feel it is a mockery.' I recollect a remarkable story, of which perhaps your lordships have heard, and which was told me by himself. One day he arrived at the House of Commons, having an important speech to make, when the servant, in closing the carriage-door, shut in Lady Beaconsfield's fingers. She had the courage not to cry out, not to say a word, and not to move till he was out of sight, lest she should disturb his mind and influence the speech he was going to make."

Mr. Gladstone, in the generous yet guarded speech he made on the occasion of

the proposed monument, thus expressed himself upon the somewhat unusual subject of the domestic virtues of a political opponent:—"There was a feeling, sir," he said, addressing the chairman of the committee, "lying nearer yet to the very centre of his existence, which, though a domestic feeling, may yet without indelicacy be now referred to—his profound, devoted, tender, grateful affection for his wife—which if, as may be the case, has deprived him—I know not whether it be so or not—of the honours of public obsequies, has nevertheless left for him a more permanent title as one who knew, even amidst the storms and temptations of political life, what was due to the sanctity and the strength of domestic affection, and who made himself an example in that respect to the country in which he lived."

On the dissolution of parliament, Mr. Disraeli did not again seek the suffrages of the constituency of Maidstone. Whatever were his reasons—whether he was offended at the accusation, no sooner made than withdrawn, that he owed certain debts in the place; or that his wife, who warmly supported his canvass, did not care to exert herself in the town for which her first husband had been the senior representative; or that he did not wish to oppose the local resident that was brought forward, or whatever was the cause—Mr. Disraeli did not pay his expected visit to Kent. He was asked to stand for Wycombe, but declined. An invitation from Shrewsbury, numerously signed, was, however, accepted, and the future protectionist leader hurried into Shropshire. He was hotly opposed, and his enemies strained every nerve to defeat him; they declared that he was a turncoat, and, when he had satisfactorily vindicated himself from the charge, they vowed that he was over head and ears in debt; when that accusation was also clearly disproved, they resorted to other misstatements; and, when these had been fairly met and contradicted, they could always fall back upon the fact that he

was "a Jew," which, of course, could not be refuted, and which was an arrow always serviceable when the quiver of the spiteful was empty. Falsehood and malice, however, failed to win the day. Mr. Disraeli attacked the new poor law, sneered at the ten-pound householder of the vaunted Reform Bill, exposed the scandalous expenditure of the Whig government, and opposed the abolition of the corn laws by

the telling announcement that cheap bread was the thin edge of the wedge for the establishment of cheap labour. His views were supported by the majority of his hearers. In conjunction with Colonel Tomline, he was returned member for Shrewsbury. The numbers were—for the Tories, Tomline, 793; Disraeli, 787; for the Liberals, Parry, 604; Temple, 579. The Tory party had gained an easy victory.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AGRICULTURAL INTEREST.

SIR ROBERT PEEL is the solitary instance on our roll of premiers of a man entirely destitute of the higher qualities of statesmanship—the creative faculty and the prescience which anticipates the course of events—who yet takes rank as a wise and great minister. Only those who confound memory with imagination can accuse him of originality of design where his political creed was concerned. Every one of the great measures with which his name is connected was the result of the labours of his predecessors; of every one of those measures he was at one time the chief opponent; yet every one of those measures was indebted to him, and not to its original author, for its enrolment upon the statute-book. Mr. Horner advocated the resumption of cash payments by the Bank; Mr. Peel opposed the motion; then he became converted to the idea; and it was through him, and not through Mr. Horner, that the currency bill became law. Mr. Canning passed his life in struggling with the legislature for the removal of Catholic disabilities. Mr. Peel was one of the most prominent opponents of the measure; yet it was through him, and not through Mr. Canning, that the Emancipation Act was carried. Mr. Cobden was the consistent advocate of the repeal of the corn laws; Sir Robert Peel was the chief of the great party which was most hostile to the efforts of the Manchester school; yet it was not Mr. Cobden, but Sir Robert Peel, who removed restrictions upon the importation of grain. He was the tenacious recipient of other men's ideas, which he elaborated, which he polished, which he methodized; but which, in spite of the finish with which they were presented for the approval of the House of

Commons, were no less the adapted schemes of others—and, curiously enough, of the very men whom at one time he had opposed.

The bitter taunts of Mr. Disraeli were, therefore, not without justification, when we consider the measures which Sir Robert Peel first denounced and afterwards advocated. It might be one-sided, but it certainly was not wholly untrue, to accuse him, as Mr. Disraeli accused him, of "trading on the ideas and intelligence of others;" of being "a burglar of other men's intellect;" and of permitting his life to develop into "one great appropriation clause." Yet, in spite of his lack of originality, Sir Robert Peel was a great minister. Never since the days of Sir Robert Walpole had there appeared a man who knew better how to excite parliamentary sympathies, how to appeal to parliamentary support, how to humour parliamentary antagonism, how to marshal parliamentary combinations and lead them on to victory. "He played upon the House of Commons," said Mr. Disraeli, "as if it were an old fiddle." Like the famous Lord Shaftesbury, one of the secrets of his strength lay in his thorough knowledge of the aims and wishes of the English people. He saw what the country wanted and obeyed its instructions. He did not stem the tide, but was carried along by the stream. He never led the nation, for it was the nation which led him; but he followed so cleverly, that to many he appeared to guide its destinies.

Another element of his power was the confidence which the middle classes reposed in him. We have had aristocratic premiers, and we now have a Radical premier, but Sir Robert Peel was essentially

a middle-class minister. He had none of that brilliancy of talent—the characteristic of a Canning or a Disraeli—which in the eyes of the middle classes is deemed so dangerous. Except in the House of Commons, he was dull, tedious, and shy, which to his admirers were only so many more proofs of his soundness and solidity of character. He had in an eminent degree those practical habits in business and that love for detail, without which no politician, in the opinion of the middle classes, can become a statesman. He had no vices; his life was pure and unsullied; and though a high tone of morality is appreciated by all whose good word is worth obtaining, by none is it more highly valued than by the middle classes. The aristocracy might laugh at him and say he had "no manners;" the Protectionists might brand him as an impostor and an apostate; but the middle classes trusted him and felt that their interests were in safe keeping. The Duke of Wellington failed to inspire them with confidence, but "they believed in Peel."

Their belief was soon to be put to the test. On the assembling of parliament, the elections had gone strongly in favour of the Tory party, and it was evident to all that the fate of the Melbourne government was sealed. Defeated on an amendment to the address, the Whig premier placed his resignation in the hands of the queen, and he was succeeded in office by Sir Robert Peel. A Tory cabinet was soon formed. Lord Lyndhurst was the chancellor; Lord Wharncliffe, president of the council; Lord Haddington, first lord of the admiralty; the Duke of Buckingham, lord privy seal; Sir James Graham, home secretary; the Earl of Aberdeen, foreign secretary; Lord Stanley, colonial secretary; Lord Ellenborough, president of the board of control; Sir Henry Hardinge, secretary at war; the Earl of Ripon, president of the board of trade; Mr. Goulburn, chancellor of the exchequer; Sir G. Knatchbull, paymaster-general; and Lord Eliot, chief secretary for Ireland. The Duke of Wellington was

a member of the cabinet, but without office. Among those not in the cabinet were Lord Lowther, postmaster-general; Lord Granville Somerset, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster; and Mr. W. E. Gladstone, vice-president of the board of trade.

Mr. Disraeli was not offered office. He had served his party loyally for five years; he was rising in the estimation of the House of Commons; apart from his marriage he was not a rich man, and there is little doubt but that, had he been asked to fill some subordinate post in the government—that of an under-secretary or of a vice-president—the compliment would have been gladly accepted. No such proposal was, however, made, and because he was ignored it afterwards pleased the peculiar malice of his enemies to assert that his opposition to Sir Robert Peel was due to his having been excluded from the ministry on this occasion. It was said that he had intrigued for office, and had received a rebuff; hence his hostility to the measures of the government, hence his personal animosity to the prime minister. Mr. Disraeli met these charges with his usual courage, and with a complete denial as to their truth. In the debate on the Corn Importation Bill (May 15, 1846), he stated before his false accusers that had he been an applicant for office, on the formation of the government of Sir Robert Peel, there would have been nothing dishonourable in the fact. He was a Conservative, he had supported his party, he was then a young man and he had never pretended to be without ambition. "But I can assure the House," he solemnly said, "nothing of the kind ever occurred. I never shall—it is totally foreign to my nature—make an application for any place. Anything more unfounded than the rumour circulated to-night, that my opposition to the right honourable gentleman has ever been influenced by my being disappointed of office, there cannot be." Lord Palmerston, shortly after Sir Robert Peel had come into power, once twitted Mr. Disraeli with this false charge. It was on the debate to unite the

diplomatic and consular services, an amalgamation which the member for Shrewsbury had advocated. "The hon. gentleman," said Lord Palmerston, "had indeed affirmed the general principle, that political adherents ought to be rewarded by appointments, and he regretted to observe an exception to that rule in the person of the hon. member himself. After the proof, however, of talent and ability which the hon. gentleman had afforded, although, perhaps, not of great industry in getting up the details of his case, he trusted, that before the end of the session, the government would overlook the slight want of industry for the sake of the talent, and that the House would see the maxim of the hon. member practically applied to his own case."

It was never a very safe proceeding to make an attack upon Mr. Disraeli, for he had the faculty of turning upon his assailant and giving as a rule far more bitter measure than he received. Lord Palmerston, who had served as secretary at war under Perceval, under Liverpool, under Canning, under Goderich, under Wellington, and as foreign minister under Grey and Melbourne, certainly laid himself open to retort so far as adherence to office was concerned, and Mr. Disraeli did not spare him. He must offer, he said, his acknowledgments to the noble viscount for his courteous aspirations for his political promotion. Such aspirations from such a quarter must be looked upon as suspicious. The noble viscount was a consummate master of the subject; and if the noble viscount would only impart to him the secret by which he had himself contrived to retain office during seven successive administrations, the present debate would certainly not be without a result.

Nor is it true that Mr. Disraeli, after having been returned for Shrewsbury, and during the period preceding the repeal of the corn laws, acted in a hostile manner towards the measures advocated by the government. We have only to refer to the pages of what Mr. Disraeli called

the "Dunciad of Politics," Hansard, to maintain this assertion. There we find the future protectionist leader playing the part of an independent, but by no means of a malevolent critic, upon the policy of the cabinet. He was a party man; but he was no blind, submissive partisan who votes as he is ordered, even when he disapproves of the schemes introduced. Still less did he permit any personal feelings he might entertain against the chief of the government to colour with their bias the views he held respecting public affairs. Early in the year 1842, when Sir Robert Peel introduced his scheme for modifying the corn laws, the member for Shrewsbury voted with the majority. His name is also to be found among the opponents of the annual motion of Mr. Villiers for the total repeal of the corn laws. Often when he felt himself unable to support the government, rather than do damage by an opposition which might be considered factious, Mr. Disraeli stood aloof altogether from the division. He neither voted for nor against the imposition of the income tax, which, as we shall subsequently see, he strongly disapproved of. He acted in the same manner towards those measures which resulted in the disruption of the Church of Scotland. His sympathy with the working-classes caused him not to look with disfavour upon the promoters of the second National Petition, yet he declined to harass the government, and purposely absented himself from the House. This course he pursued throughout the early years of the Peel administration so far as he consistently could; but when it came to a question of what he considered principle, he allowed no party restrictions to stand in the way of his vote. He spoke in favour, as we have said, of a combination of the consular and diplomatic services, and was opposed by Peel. He proposed, and was thwarted by the premier, that a committee should inquire into the late invasion of Afghanistan, since it appeared to him, he said, "that no better reason existed for that invasion than could

be offered by France, if she should choose to cross the Rhine, because she entertained some vague idea that all Europe was coalescing against her." He resisted the proposal to disfranchise Sudbury, and went into the lobby with the minority. He was an advocate for commercial treaties, as opposed to the unconditional repeal of import duties, and boldly delivered his opinions without any fencing or scheming reservations. On the Irish question he spoke with equal force and lucidity, but at greater length; the speech he made on that occasion is too masterly to be briefly dismissed.

The condition of Ireland was becoming more and more alarming. The agitation excited by O'Connell for the repeal of the union had now spread almost throughout the entire country. Monster meetings were held, at which an infuriated mob assembled, ready to wreak their vengeance upon all who should oppose their resolve to sever themselves from hated England. The usual concomitants of Irish revolt attended upon these proceedings. Landlords were unable to obtain their rents; the cattle of submissive tenants were houghed; all who refused to sympathize with the agitation were marked out for punishment, were unable to obtain the necessaries of life, were often "carded," and occasionally shot. If the miserable people of a miserable island were to be kept in subjection, and if their country was not to pass into the hands of the enemy, it was evident that the English government must now actively bestir itself. It was no longer the revolt of a section, but the rebellion of a nation. Such was the situation of affairs when Lord John Russell moved to inquire into the state of Ireland. An important debate ensued, and on the fourth night (February 16, 1844) Mr. Disraeli rose up to address the House of Commons. He was listened to with great attention, for he spoke words which put the case clearly before his audience, and merited all the consideration they deserved. It had been stated, he be-

gan, that the grievances of Ireland had existed ever since the introduction of the reformed religion into that country. He denied that there was any necessary and irresistible connection between the introduction of Protestant principles into the island and the misgovernment they now deplored. Take, he said, the period preceding the breaking out of the civil war. "At that period there was a parliament in Dublin called by a Protestant king, presided over by a Protestant viceroy, and at that moment there was a Protestant established church in Ireland; yet the majority of the members of that parliament were Roman Catholics. The government was at that time carried on by a council of state, presided over by a Protestant deputy, yet many of the members of that council were Roman Catholics. The municipalities were then full of Roman Catholics. Several of the sheriffs also were Roman Catholics, and a very considerable number of magistrates were Roman Catholics. It is, therefore, very evident that it is not the necessary consequence of English connection—of a Protestant monarchy, or even of a Protestant church—that this embittered feeling at present exists; nor that that system of exclusion, which either in form or spirit has so long existed, is the consequence of Protestantism."

Then what was this much talked-of Irish question? asked Mr. Disraeli. "I want to see," he cried, "a public man come forward and say what the Irish question is. One says it is a physical question, another a spiritual. Now, it is the absence of the aristocracy; now the absence of railroads. It is the pope one day, potatoes the next. Let us consider Ireland, as we should any other country similarly situated, in our closets. Then we shall see a teeming population which, with reference to the cultivated soil, is denser to the square mile than that of China, created solely by agriculture, with none of those sources of wealth which are developed with civilization, and sustained consequently upon the

lowest conceivable diet; so that in case of failure they have no other means of subsistence upon which they can fall back. That dense population in extreme distress inhabit an island where there is an established church which is not their church; and a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom live in distant capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien church; and, in addition, the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish question."

How, then, were these evils to be remedied? By a strong executive, a just administration, and ecclesiastical equality, he answered. Grant these, and you would have order in Ireland; the improvement of the physical condition of the people would follow—not very rapidly, perhaps; but what were fifty years even in the history of a nation? If these recommendations were adopted, in fifty years hence the men who should succeed the present generation in parliament would find the people of Ireland a contented and thriving peasantry. But we should not be deterred by difficulties—everything great was difficult. The Tory party was now in power, and the Tories had ever been the friends of Ireland. Was it denied? Was it the Tory party that introduced the penal code? It was not the Tory party that made a factitious aristocracy out of the plunder of the church. The penal code had been introduced, and at the same time a new spirit had been infused into what was called the Protestant church of Ireland—a Puritan spirit; and from that moment the Church of Ireland lost all its influence, and then those unfortunate consequences which have ensued had their origin. "Yet," said the speaker, "at every period when Tory politics and Tory statesmen have succeeded in breaking through the powerful trammels of Whig policy, you will invariably observe that there has been a hope for Ireland—a streak of light observable in its gloomy horizon. Did not Mr. Pitt, the last of Tory statesmen, propose measures for the settlement

of Ireland, which, had they been agreed to by parliament, would have saved Ireland from her present condition? You would have had the Roman Catholics of Ireland emancipated at a very early period, and you would have had the church question, too, settled at a very early period. . . . If we want permanently to settle Irish affairs with credit to ourselves, and to the satisfaction of the Irish people, we must reconstruct the social system of that country, and we must commence by organizing a very comprehensive and pervading executive. When we have done this, and got the administration of justice into our hands, we should, perhaps, find a less necessity for legislation for Ireland than has been considered requisite. . . . I look to no foreign, no illegitimate influences for bringing about that result—not to the passions of the Irish people, not to the machinations of their demagogues, not to the intrigues of distant nations, but to a power far more influential, far more benignant—a power more recently risen in the world, not yet sufficiently recognized."—[*A Voice*: "What, 'Young England ?'"]—"No, not Young England," retorted Mr. Disraeli, "but a power which Young England respects—that irresistible law of our modern civilization which has decreed that the system which cannot bear discussion is doomed."

Let us here say a few words respecting the new association which, during the earlier years of the Peel administration, was sneered at as "Young England." The late Lord Beaconsfield was always a great believer in the power and efficacy of youth. The sunshine of life in his eyes was youth, all the rest was but the after glow. Middle age, with its caution gained by experience; old age, with its selfishness caused by neglect, were no doubt useful elements in their way in the government of mankind; but youth when able, when energetic, when generous, carried all before it—it was divine. Mr. Disraeli thus eulogises its power and the activity of its ambition in "*Coningsby*," a novel representing the views of "Young

England," and which for its literary finish, its brilliant dialogue, its exquisite analysis of character, and the fidelity of its historical narrative, is the finest political novel in our language:—

"For life in general," remarks Sidonia, one of the chief characters of the book, after eulogising the power and opportunities of gifted youth. "Youth is a blunder; Manhood a struggle; Old Age a regret. Do not suppose," he added, smiling, "that I hold that youth is genius; all that I say is, that genius, when young, is divine. Why, the greatest captains of ancient and modern times both conquered Italy at five-and-twenty! Youth, extreme youth, overthrew the Persian empire. Don John of Austria won Lepanto at twenty-five, the greatest battle of modern times; had it not been for the jealousy of Philip, the next year he would have been Emperor of Mauritania. Gaston de Foix was only twenty-two when he stood a victor on the plain of Ravenna. Every one remembers Condé and Rocroy at the same age. Gustavus Adolphus died at thirty-eight. Look at his captains: that wonderful Duke of Weimar, only thirty-six when he died. Banier himself, after all his miracles, died at forty-five. Cortes was little more than thirty when he gazed upon the golden cupolas of Mexico. When Maurice of Saxony died at thirty-two, all Europe acknowledged the loss of the greatest captain and the profoundest statesman of the age. Then there is Nelson, Clive; but these are warriors, and perhaps you may think there are greater things than war. I do not: I worship the Lord of Hosts. But take the most illustrious achievements of civil prudence. Innocent III., the greatest of the popes, was the despot of Christendom at thirty-seven. John de Medici was a cardinal at fifteen, and according to Guicciardini, baffled with his statecraft Ferdinand of Arragon himself. He was pope as Leo X. at thirty-seven. Luther robbed even him of his richest province at thirty-five. Take Ignatius Loyola and John Wesley,

they worked with young brains. Ignatius was only thirty when he made his pilgrimage and wrote the 'Spiritual Exercises.' Pascal wrote a great work at sixteen, and died at thirty-seven, the greatest of Frenchmen. "Ah! that fatal thirty-seven, which reminds me of Byron, greater even as a man than a writer. Was it experience that guided the pencil of Raphael when he painted the palaces of Rome? He, too died at thirty-seven. Richelieu was secretary of state at thirty-one. Well then, there were Bolingbroke and Pitt, both ministers before other men left off cricket. Grotius was in great practice at seventeen, and attorney-general at twenty-four. And Acquaviva was general of the Jesuits, ruled every cabinet in Europe, and colonized America before he was thirty-seven. What a career! But it is needless to multiply instances! *The history of heroes is the history of youth.*"

Of the club of young men who banded themselves together to carry out the enthusiastic policy of "Young England," Mr. Disraeli was the chief—its presiding and inspiring genius. With him were associated Lord John Manners, his staunch friend and supporter throughout the whole of his political career; the brilliant George Sydney-Smythe; Henry Hope, the son of the author of "Anastasius;" Monckton Milnes, the poet; Faber, who afterwards completed his Tractarianism by embracing the faith of Rome, and others of lesser note. The animating spirit of the new creed was that the salvation of the country was to proceed from its youth, the "new generation":—

"I have immense faith in the new generation," says Millbank, one of the heroes in the novel "Coningsby."

"It is a holy thing to see a state saved by its youth," said Coningsby; and then he added in a tone of humility, if not of depression, "But what a task! What a variety of qualities, what a combination of circumstances, is requisite! What bright abilities and what noble patience! What

confidence from the people, what favour from the Most High!"

The faith of the "new generation" might be sentimental, but it was to be at the same time eminently practical. The higher classes were to visit the cottages of the poor, and by sympathy, kindly charity, and gentle counsel, bridge over the gulf which separated "the two nations." Henceforth the peer and the pauper were not to be the strangers they had been to each other; the peer was to lose his pride, the pauper his prejudices. The Church was to be no longer the mechanism of a creed, but a real, animating influence; once more her doors were to be thrown open to all classes, her walls thronged with worshippers, her priests alive to the mission for which they had been consecrated, and the piety which had built our monasteries and founded our chapels once more to be restored in all its purity and vigour. Thus sang the poet of the Fraternity—

"Yes! through the Church must come the healing power,
To bind our wounds in this tumultuous hour;
From her old courts and altar-steps must flow
The streams of grace that shall assuage our woe."

Alms-giving was to be practised as described by Mr. Lyle in "Coningsby," and as sung by Lord John Manners:—

"The daily beadsman waiting for his bread,
Where good and bad were all, unquestioned, fed;
For then it was not to our rulers known
That God was mindful of the first alone;
The monks still practised their dear Lord's
command,
And rained their charity throughout the land."

In short, through the mission of "Young England" religion was to be restored, poverty repressed, caste-exclusiveness to be exchanged for liberality of feeling, and mankind taught that there was something higher than the cold philosophy of Bentham, something nobler than the culpable self-denial inculcated by Malthus. The apostles of the new faith met with much ridicule in their day, yet the creed they taught was a holy and unselfish one. It did its work

well, and to its example we owe, in no small measure, our churches free and filled, our charity organization societies, our workmen's clubs, our homes, asylums, and refuges, and the other numerous institutions at the present day which have for their object the spread of religion, the advancement of education, and the mitigation of the miseries of humanity.

Toward the close of the year 1844 Mr. Disraeli, as the leader of the school of "Young England," was asked to deliver a lecture at the Manchester Athenæum—an institution which, after struggling against various pecuniary difficulties, was at last successfully established. The member for Shrewsbury chose as his subject the "Acquirement of Knowledge," and the lecture he delivered on that occasion, though not to be met with in the published speeches of Mr. Disraeli, nor alluded to in any of his works, is fully worthy of preservation. A young man—and in politics, as at the bar, a man under forty is still young—busy as a politician and as an author, does not always care to come forward, and on a local platform trouble himself to present the truths and sound moral advice which are conspicuous in this lecture. Mr. Disraeli was, however, to address the youth of a great town, and such an audience always commanded his best efforts. He began by congratulating the Athenæum upon having successfully surmounted the obstacles it had at first to encounter, and being now definitely established as a useful and prosperous institution with a valuable library, a news room, a lecture hall, and a gymnasium. The object of its founders was excellent. "It is difficult to conceive," he said, "how a nobler purpose, if for a moment we dilate upon it, could have animated your intentions. When we remember the class of your community for which this institution was particularly adapted—when we conceive, difficult as it is, surrounded as we now are with luxury and pleasure—when we attempt to picture to our imaginations what is the position of a youth, perhaps of

very tender years, sent, as I am informed is very frequently the case, from a remote district, to form his fortunes in this great metropolis of labour and of science—when we think of that youth, tender in age, with no domestic hearth to soothe and stimulate, to counsel or control—when we picture him to ourselves after a day of indefatigable toil, left to his lonely evenings and his meagre lodgings without a friend and without a counsellor, flying to dissipation from sheer want of distraction, and perhaps involved in vice before he is conscious of the fatal net that is surrounding him—what a contrast to his position does it offer when we picture him to ourselves with a feeling of self-confidence, which supports and sustains him after his day of toil, entering a great establishment where everything that can satisfy curiosity, that can form taste, that can elevate the soul of man, and lead to noble thoughts and honourable intentions, surrounds him! When we think of the convenience and the comfort, the kindness and the sympathy which, with a due decorum of manners, he is sure to command—this youth, who but a few hours before was a stranger—viewing an institution like the present only in this limited aspect, one must regard it as a great harbour of intellectual refuge and social propriety."

He hoped that so useful an institution would not be permitted to collapse. He looked upon it as part of that great educational movement which was the noble and ennobling characteristic of the age in which they lived. To diffuse knowledge was the great duty of mankind. It was knowledge that equalized the social condition of man—that gave to all, however different their political position, passions which were in common, and enjoyments which were universal. Knowledge was like the mystic ladder in the patriarch's dream. Its base rested on the primeval earth—its crest was lost in the shadowy splendour of the empyrean; while the great authors who for traditional ages had held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and

erudition, were the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven. "Heretofore," he said, "society was established necessarily on a very different principle to that which is now its basis. As civilization has gradually progressed, it has equalized the physical qualities of man. Instead of the strong arm it is the strong head that is now the moving principle of society. You have disenthroned Force, and placed on her high seat Intelligence; and the necessary consequence of this great revolution is, that it has become the duty and the delight equally of every citizen to cultivate his faculties. The prince of all philosophy has told you, in an immortal apophthegm so familiar to you all that it is written now in your halls and chambers, 'Knowledge is power.' If that memorable passage had been pursued by the student who first announced this discovery of that great man to society, he would have found an oracle not less striking, and in my mind certainly not less true; for Lord Bacon has not only said that 'knowledge is power,' but living one century after the discovery of the printing-press, he has also announced to the world that 'knowledge is pleasure.' Why, when the great body of mankind had become familiar with this great discovery—when they learned that a new source was opened to them of influence and enjoyment, is it wonderful that from that hour the heart of nations has palpitated with the desire of becoming acquainted with all that has happened, and with speculating on what may occur? It has indeed produced upon the popular intellect an influence almost as great as—I might say analogous to—the great change which was produced upon the old commercial world by the discovery of the Americas. A new standard of value was introduced, and, after this, to be distinguished, man must be intellectual."

Knowledge was no longer a lonely hermit, that offered an occasional and captivating hospitality to some wandering pilgrim;

knowledge was now found in the market-place a citizen, and a leader of citizens. Then, mindful of the audience he was especially addressing, and that he was the apostle to the new generation which was to save the state from atheism in religion, from republicanism in politics, and from immorality in philosophy, he thus spoke to the youth of Manchester. The conclusion of his speech is as practical and high-souled as anything he ever uttered, and the youth of other towns besides Manchester might do worse than take to heart the teaching contained in this gospel of Young Englandism :—

" I would say one word now to those for whom this institution is not entirely, but principally, formed. I would address myself to the youth on whom the hopes of all societies repose and depend. I doubt not that they feel conscious of the position which they occupy—a position which, under all circumstances, at all periods, and in every clime and country, is one replete with duty. *The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity;* but the youth I address have duties peculiar to the position which they occupy. They are the rising generation of a society unprecedented in the history of the world, that is at once powerful and new. In other parts of the kingdom the remains of an ancient civilization are prepared to guide, to cultivate, to influence the rising mind; but they are born in a miraculous creation of novel powers, and it is rather a providential instinct that has developed the necessary means of maintaining the order of your new civilization, than the matured foresight of man. This is their inheritance. They will be called on to perform duties—great duties. I, for one, wish for their sakes, and for the sake of our country, that they may be performed greatly. I give to them that counsel which I have ever given to youth, and which I believe to be the wisest and the best—I tell them to aspire. *I believe that the man who does not look up will look down; and that the spirit that does not dare to soar is destined*

perhaps to grovel. Every individual is entitled to aspire to that position which he believes his faculties qualify him to occupy. I know there are some who look with what I believe to be a short-sighted timidity and false prudence upon such views. They are apt to tell us—' Beware of filling the youthful mind with an impetuous tumult of turbulent fancies; teach him rather to be content with his position; do not induce him to fancy that he is that which he is not, or to aspire to that which he cannot achieve.' In my mind, these are superficial delusions. *He who enters the world finds his level.* It is the solitary being, the isolated individual alone in his solitude, who may be apt to miscalculate his powers, and misunderstand his character. But action teaches him the truth, even if it be a stern one. Association offers him the best criticism in the world, and I will venture to say that if he belong to this Athenæum, though when he enters it he may think himself a genius, if nature has not given him a creative and passionate soul, before a week has elapsed he will become a very sober-minded individual. I wish to damp no youthful ardour. I can conceive what opportunities such an institution as this would have afforded to the suggestive mind of a youthful Arkwright. I can conceive what a nursing-mother such an institution must have been to the brooding genius of your illustrious and venerated Dalton. It is the asylum of the self-formed; it is the counsellor of those who want counsel; but it is not a guide that will mislead, and it is the last place that will fill the mind of man with false ideas and false conceptions. He reads a newspaper, and his conceit oozes out after reading a leading article. He refers to the library, and the calm wisdom of centuries and sages moderates the rash impulse of juvenescence. He finds new truths in the lecture-room, and he goes home with a conviction that he is not so learned as he imagined. In the discussion of a great question with his equals in station, perhaps he finds he has his

superiors in intellect. *These are the means by which the mind of man is brought to a healthy state, by which that self-knowledge that always has been lauded by sages may be most securely attained.* It is a rule of universal virtue, and from the senate to the counting-house will be found of universal application. Then, to the youth of Manchester, representing the civic youth of this great county and this great district, I now appeal. Let it never be said again that the fortunes of this institution were in danger. Let them take advantage of this hour of prosperity calmly to examine and deeply to comprehend the character of that institution in which their best interests are involved, and which for them may afford a relaxation which brings no pang, and yields information which may bear them to fortune. It is to them I appeal with confidence, because I feel I am pleading their cause—with confidence, because in them I repose my hopes. When nations fall, it is because a degenerate race intervenes between the class that created and the class that is doomed. Let them, then, remember what has been done for them. The leaders of their community have not been remiss in regard to their interests. Let them remember that, when the inheritance devolves upon them, *they are not only to enjoy, but to improve.* They will some day succeed to the high places of this great community; let them recollect those who lighted the way for them; and when they have wealth, when they have authority, when they have power, let it not be said that they were deficient in public virtue and public spirit. When the torch is delivered to them, let them also light the path of human progress to educated man."

We are now approaching the period when the genius of the subject of this biography was first to exhibit itself in so marked a manner as to be recognized both by friend and foe, and to raise him at one bound to a position of supreme authority. He had closely watched the tactics of the prime minister, and the conclusion

was gradually forcing itself upon his mind that Sir Robert Peel was not the organizing and controlling spirit he had imagined him to be. He saw him almost entirely dependent upon others, paying servile heed to the wishes of the Opposition, listening helplessly to the suggestions of leagues for this measure and of associations for that measure, to the great danger of the cause he professed, and to the following he was supposed to lead. As the agitation with regard to free trade developed, Mr. Disraeli was the first to observe that the prime minister did not seem sure of himself. There was an indecision in his movements and a silent yielding to external influences which, to the member for Shrewsbury, augured ill for the cause which had borne Sir Robert Peel upon its tide to office. Mr. Disraeli and those who thought with him had no objection to the principles of free trade in the abstract—it was an old Tory measure, since Pitt was its first advocate—provided they rested upon a sound basis. He would give and take, but he would not consent to give without also being permitted to take. He knew, as we all know, that in the abstract the teaching of the free traders could not be disputed. It was as plain as that two and two made four. Let each nation freely interchange its respective produce—let the country enriched by coal and iron change its manufactures for the grain and wine and silk of countries whose soil and climate are specially adapted for the production of such articles—and in the long run both the consuming and producing classes will reap the benefit. But the free trade must not be all on one side. If protection was to be abolished, reciprocity should be substituted; if French wines and French silks were to enter British ports free of duty, British cotton and British cutlery should be allowed, on the same terms, to be stored up in the warehouses on French quays. Gladly would we receive the grain, and hemp, and hides, and tallow from the northern powers exempt from taxation,

provided we saw the ports of Russia and Sweden, Denmark and Germany, acting with the same liberality towards our hardware, our cutlery, and the produce of our factories. But to glut our markets with foreign goods imported duty free, whilst British goods exported to foreign ports would only be admitted on the payment of heavy imposts, was a most suicidal policy—a policy which could only be carried out at the expense of several of our most important interests. Such were the views then held by Mr. Disraeli and the Protectionists; and it was because the member for Shrewsbury observed the prime minister gradually forsaking the cause he had vowed to support, and insidiously abandoning the party that had led him to power, that those bitter strictures were passed upon his conduct in the debates of 1845–46—that “he was a parliamentary middle-man who bamboozled one party and plundered another;” that he “caught the Whigs bathing, and walked away with their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position, and he is himself a strict conservative of their garments;” that he was “a watcher of the atmosphere—a man who takes his observations, and when he finds the wind in a particular quarter, trims his sails to suit it.” “Such a man,” cried the chagrined Protectionist, “may be a powerful minister, but he is no more a great statesman than the man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip.”

Mr. Disraeli was not taken by surprise at the silent conversion of the prime minister. Months before the repeal of the corn laws he had bade all Tories be on their guard, and had boldly stated that Protection in 1845 was in the same plight as Protestantism had been in 1828—about to be betrayed by the very man who had promised to defend it. Then, as Sir Robert Peel played more and more into the hands of the leaguers, Mr. Disraeli openly severed himself from his former leader, and by all the arts of the most brilliant generalship, gradually became the mouthpiece of the

dissatisfied section of the Tory party. “The right honourable gentleman,” he cried, “came into power on the strength of our votes, but he would rely for the permanency of his ministry on his political opponents. He may be right—he may even, to a certain extent, be successful—in pursuing this line of conduct which he has adopted—in menacing his friends and cringing to his opponents; but I for one am disposed to look upon it as a success tending neither to the honour of the House nor to his own credit.” He spoke still more bitterly of the conduct of Peel on another occasion, when the agricultural interest was before the House, and summed up the character of the government in a phrase which will long be remembered.

“Why, what has the right honourable gentleman *not* done for agriculture?” he sneered, when the country party expressed themselves dissatisfied. “Before the meeting of parliament, the right honourable gentleman reconstructed his cabinet, and left out the minister of trade. There was a great compliment to agriculture! It was the most marked thing I know. The agriculturists, then, ought to be satisfied. And yet they complain! . . . What do they want? Not this tax to be taken off, or this act to be done. No. They complain of the ‘conduct’ of the right honourable gentleman. There is no doubt a difference in the right honourable gentleman’s demeanour as leader of the Opposition and minister of the Crown. But that is the old story; you must not contrast too strongly the hours of courtship with the years of possession. It is very true that the right honourable gentleman’s conduct is different. I remember him making his Protection speeches. They were the best speeches I ever heard. It was a great thing to hear the right honourable gentleman say, ‘I would sooner be the leader of the gentlemen of England than possess the confidence of sovereigns.’ That was a grand thing. We do not hear much of the ‘gentlemen of England’ now. But what of that? They have the pleasure

of memory—the charm of reminiscences. They were his first love; and though he may not kneel to them now as in the hour of passion, still they can recall the past; and nothing is more useless and unwise than these scenes of crimination and reproach, for we know that, in all these cases, when the beloved object has ceased to charm, it is in vain to appeal to the feelings. You know that this is true. Every man almost has gone through it. My honourable friends reproach the right honourable gentleman. The right honourable gentleman does what he can to keep them quiet; he sometimes takes refuge in arrogant silence, and sometimes he treats them with haughty frigidity; and if they know anything of human nature they would take the hint and shut their mouths. But they won't. And what then happens? What happens under all such circumstances? The right honourable gentleman being compelled to interfere, sends down his valet, who says, in the gentlest manner, 'We can have no whining here.* And that, sir, is exactly the case of the great agricultural interest—that beauty which everybody wooed, and one deluded. There is a fatality in such charms, and we now seem to approach the catastrophe of her career. Protection appears to be in about the same condition that Protestantism was in in 1828. The country will draw its moral. For my part, if we are to have free trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the honourable member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden), than by one who, through skilful parliamentary manœuvres, has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and a great party. For myself,

* Mr. Cobden had moved for a select committee to inquire into the causes and extent of the alleged existing agricultural distress, and into the effect of legislative protection upon the interests of landowners, tenant-farmers, and farm labourers. The motion was opposed on behalf of the government by Mr. Sidney Herbert, the secretary at war, in a rather indiscreet speech, in the course of which he said that "it was distasteful to him, as a member of the agricultural body, to be always coming to parliament whining for protection." Mr. Disraeli's allusion to this expression *whining* was received with tremendous cheering and roars of laughter from the Opposition.

I care not what may be the result. Dissolve, if you please, the parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a *Conservative government is an organized hypocrisy.*"

Let us briefly sketch the history of the proceedings of this "organized hypocrisy." From the general principles of free trade Sir Robert Peel never at any time withheld his approval. "I believe," he said, when laying his new tariff before the House of Commons, "that on the general principles of free trade there is now no great difference of opinion; and that all agree in the general rule that we 'should purchase in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.'" From the application of these principles he, however, excepted the sugar duties and the corn laws. He held that the abolition of the duties on corn would deal a most severe blow to the agricultural interest at home, whilst to remit the taxation on sugar would visit hardly upon our West India colonies, already terribly crippled by the emancipation of their slaves. At this time there were four great parties in the state, each maintaining different views upon this important question. There were the Whigs, who were now in favour of a fixed duty upon corn; there were the Tories, who favoured a varying duty; there were the ultra-Protectionists, who objected to any modification of the corn laws; and there were the Free Traders, who contested for the abolition of all duties upon corn. Sir Robert Peel, on taking office, was in favour of a varying duty; in the present agitation of the country he felt himself bound to re-consider the state of the laws affecting the importation of corn, and he believed that by the adoption of a sliding scale the compromise he so dearly loved would be effected between severe protection on the one hand and total abolition on the other. Accordingly he proposed that when home-grown wheat was at 50s. and under 51s.

per quarter, the duty on foreign corn should stand at 20s.; when home-grown wheat rose to 54s., the duty should decline to 18s., and so on, until when home-grown wheat rose to 75s. and upwards, the duty should sink to 1s. By the adoption of this plan he considered that the price of wheat would be kept at a moderate level.

But as the efforts of the corn law league increased in their intensity, as their teaching daily made fresh converts, and as the lower orders were now as determined to have the corn laws repealed as they had been a few years ago to pass the Reform Bill, it began gradually to dawn both upon Sir Robert Peel as leader of the Conservatives, and upon Lord John Russell as leader of the Whigs, that the existing state of things could not be maintained. This opinion was all the more confirmed by an alarming evil that now appeared upon the scene. The poorer Irish, owing to their improvident habits, their lack of energy, and their natural love for the uncertainties of a half savage mode of existence, were entirely dependent for their means of subsistence upon the potato, and there was every prospect of this form of nourishment failing them owing to a terrible blight which had now attacked the roots of this vegetable. The Peel cabinet, in the midst of the agitation upon corn-law repeal, were called upon to face an Irish potato famine, fraught with all the miseries and seditions attendant upon such a visitation. The prime minister saw that in the event of so awful a catastrophe, the maintenance of an artificial restriction for the benefit of a particular class would excite the most dangerous criticism. He felt that the only solution of the difficulty, in spite of his past objections, was that advocated by the Manchester school—the absolute repeal of the corn laws. As in the days of the Catholic agitation, so now in the days of agrarian agitation, it was Ireland that forced the hand of the government.

The position of Sir Robert Peel was embarrassing. He had taken office pledged to

resist repeal; his followers were composed of men greatly dependent upon the land for their rents and resources; to the squire and the farmer the abolition of the duties on corn would result in a grave loss of income. The agricultural interest had already murmured against the removal of various protective duties in the new tariff of the premier, and it was indisposed to yield further concessions. Already, as we have seen, "one solitary voice" on the Tory side of the House, with all the wit of mordant epigram, had declared that protection was on the eve of betrayal, and that it behoved its followers to keep strict vigil over their interests. Lord John Russell, however, was fettered by no such obstacles. To the mass who made up the larger portion of his supporters—the bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and smaller tradespeople, who derived their income from capital and not from land—the repeal of the corn laws would be a measure warmly welcomed, whilst its only opponents would be a few Whigs of the severer type. Thus, as matters then stood, both the head of the government and the leader of the Opposition had arrived at the same conclusion that the laws protective of agriculture must be expunged from the statute-book. The question now arose by whom were they to be repealed—by the Whigs under Lord John, or by the Conservatives "educated" up to the new opinions by their chief?

For some weeks Sir Robert hesitated as to the course to be adopted; then he was startled into sudden action by the famous Edinburgh letter. Whilst on a visit, in the November of 1845, to the "Modern Athens," Lord John Russell had addressed a letter to his London constituents, commenting upon the state of affairs. In this now historical epistle he declared that the present condition of the country, in regard to its supply of food, could not be viewed without apprehension. "Forethought and bold precaution," he said, "may avert any serious evils—indcision and procrastination may produce

a state of suffering which it is frightful to contemplate." Parliament, he hinted in this cunning bid for office, had met and separated without affording any promise of seasonable relief; it became, therefore, the duty of the queen's subjects to consider how the impending calamities could be averted, or at least mitigated. To effect this there was but one plan, the repeal of the corn laws. He candidly confessed that his views on this subject had undergone a great alteration. "I used to be of opinion," wrote Lord John, "that corn was an exception to the general rules of political economy; but observation and experience have convinced me that we ought to abstain from all interference with the supply of food. Neither a government nor a legislature can ever regulate the corn market with the beneficial effects which the entire freedom of sale and purchase are sure of themselves to produce." Let us then, he concluded, unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people.

After so frank an expression of opinion on the part of his rival, Sir Robert Peel saw that further hesitation or delay would be most dangerous to his position. He summoned a cabinet council, and endeavoured to convince his colleagues that the entire repeal of the corn laws had now become not a matter of choice, but of political necessity. Like most short-sighted men, his inspection of all that came within his immediate ken was most minute, and he saw what few of the opponents of free trade at that time were able to perceive. As a rule, the protection of most industries only directly affects the minority; consequently the opposition such protection encounters is limited to the clique whose welfare is being especially affected. The protection of pig iron might agitate a class, but it would not excite a nation, for the simple reason that a large portion of the

country can live independent of the rise and fall in the value of pig iron. The protection of corn, the most important article of food in the country, was, however, a very different matter. With the exception of the agricultural interest, all the consuming classes were on this occasion united in their efforts to remove the restriction upon the manufacture of cheap bread. Consequently the Protectionists were a coterie against the nation, and in a free country like ours, when a minority endeavours to suppress the views of an active and powerful majority, the issue of the struggle can have but one end. Sir Robert Peel saw that the repeal of the corn laws had developed from a party question into a national question, and that resistance to the cry was daily becoming more and more impracticable. Lord Stanley and the advocates of protection, however, thought differently, and declined to adopt the opinions which the premier now held. They refused to be "educated." Unable to convert his cabinet to his views, there was only one honourable course for Sir Robert Peel to pursue. Convinced that, if the corn laws were retained, Ireland would be laid low by famine, and throughout Great Britain there would be scarcity of food, he tendered his resignation, and it was accepted. Lord John Russell was intrusted with the task of forming an administration, but, owing to the refusal of Earl Grey to unite with him, he was unable to comply with his sovereign's commands. Lord Stanley felt that he was not strong enough to succeed where Lord John had failed, and the consequence was that Sir Robert Peel, pledged to carry repeal, resumed his post as prime minister. With the exception of Lord Stanley, who was succeeded by Mr. Gladstone, the ministry was the same as before the resignation of Sir Robert.

Never in the whole annals of parliamentary history was change of opinion more bitterly and more fiercely criticised than the conversion of Sir Robert Peel from the principles

of protection to those of free trade. It was Mr. Disraeli's opportunity, and he availed himself to the full of all the advantages the situation offered. A large section of the Tory party considered themselves betrayed by the leader they had trusted, and they were burning to express their indignation at the premier's conduct, and to exhibit their opposition to a measure which they deemed would usher in the ruin of the agricultural cause. They were, however, simple country gentlemen not given to eloquence, and somewhat in awe, like boys of their schoolmaster, of the power and position of the cold, repellent Sir Robert Peel. They longed to denounce the arch-hypocrite and crush him with their invective; but when they rose to address the House, their ideas passed away, and their abuse flowed tame and powerless from their passionate lips. And now Mr. Disraeli stepped in. Even in the opinion of his enemies his conduct on this occasion showed consummate tact and generalship. All the wealth of his eloquence, all his wit, his polished satire, his instinctive knowledge of the arts by which men are united and controlled, he now devoted to the cause of the forsaken Protectionists. The oratory they did not possess, the invectives they could not launch, the indignation they were powerless to express, were all centred in him, and through him the hate of the country party was focussed against the object of their wrath. Fierce as have been the denunciations which the House of Commons, in the course of its history, has had to listen to, it has never witnessed anything finer in the form of polished invective, and of humorous yet biting similes, than the philippics which the member for Shrewsbury now directed against the prime minister, until the cold, self-contained man writhed in torture, and at one time vowed to challenge in mortal combat his pitiless critic.

The time had indeed come when the House was pleased to hear Mr. Disraeli. Night after night, as he rose to the attack, he was listened to in the stillest

silence, save when cheer after cheer broke from the lips of his followers, showing that the barbed arrow had winged its flight and had struck home. He was now no mere member of the House of Commons, but the representative of the cause of protection, and the nominal lieutenant but actual leader of that section of the Conservative party which had separated itself from the control of the prime minister. Nor in this opposition was there anything scheming or insincere. Mr. Disraeli looked upon the policy of protection as sound and logical. He held that if the corn laws were repealed, the farmers would be ruined, and the ruin of the farmers would destroy the landlord interest, and the overthrow of the landlord interest would be the triumph of democracy over constitutionalism. Free trade in corn would lead to free trade in other commodities; and unless the principle was adopted by other nations, of which there was then no sign, it would act to the detriment of the commercial interests of the country. Has he been so completely wrong in his surmises? Are the advocates of free trade as sanguine now of their policy as they were in the past? With the exception of England, the commercial tendency of every country is setting more and more towards protection. And can we look with unmixed satisfaction upon the present condition of England? Our farmers, unable to compete with the importation of foreign grain and American meat, are throwing up their farms and seeking pastures new in the colonies and the United States, much to the crippling of the resources of the landlord.* Our cotton and woollen manu-

* "Meanwhile it may safely be urged that no more important question ever demanded the serious attention of our government than how it may be possible to restore vitality and hope to the discouraged and declining agricultural interest in these islands. In England alone there are at this moment many thousands of acres—especially where the land is strong and fitted for the growth of wheat—lying idle from lack of tenants. Tenants with capital—and their name is legion—are to be found by the score who despair of being able to make two ends meet, and have withdrawn from the pursuit of agriculture, in which they were reared, and for which alone they are fitted. What is to be done? The question concerns Mr. Bright and the representatives of manufacturing industries not less than noblemen and gentlemen who are 'as red as the chin.'"—*Morning Paper*, June 9, 1881.

facturers openly assert that they are unable to compete with the goods of foreign countries admitted untaxed into our ports. In spite of our coal and iron, our machinists complain that, owing to the cheapness of foreign labour, French and Belgian machinery can be imported at a less cost than it takes to produce in this country. What have become of the looms of the silk-weavers of Coventry and Spitalfields, of our ship-building trade on the Thames, of our sugar refineries? On all sides we hear of the dullness of trade, of the decline in the carrying trade of our great railway companies, of the ruinous conflicts between labour and capital, and that trade is fast leaving the country. In spite of the prophets who assured us that a reaction in England was impossible against free trade, have we not heard, not silent and hole-in-the-corner murmurs, but opinions openly expressed as to the advisability of returning to limited protection, or for reciprocity in free trade?*

Though the ruling spirit of the Protectionists at this time was undoubtedly Mr. Disraeli, the nominal leader of the disaffected party was Lord George Bentinck, a son of the Duke of Portland. Lord George had "sat in eight parliaments without having taken part in any great

* A leading journal thus comments upon the Preston election, which was gained by the Tory candidate openly advocating a return to limited protection:—"Mr. Ecroyd avowed himself a qualified Protectionist, and the operatives said ditto with enthusiasm, in spite of skilful appeals borrowed from the old anti-corn law days—though they have long since lost their charm—to pronounce for the big loaf against the little one. Is it, then, to be inferred that the Preston working men are Protectionists? Opinion lately has ripened so fast in a particular direction that, improbable as it may seem, there may be ground before long to discuss a much wider question—that is, whether the English operatives as a whole are, if not Protectionists, at least in favour of reciprocity to the extent of imposing duties on manufactured goods.

It is not a little remarkable that the demand for reciprocity, or for something in the nature of revived protection for native industry of all kinds, emanates at this moment chiefly from the manufacturing classes. . . . The truth is that dull trade and hostile tariffs are working a silent revolution in the sentiments of large classes who have never thought out economical questions at all, but who are simply influenced by considerations of self-interest; and, unless trade speedily revive, the politicians who appeal to these considerations are sure to gain suffrages. Even Mr. Gladstone's reply to the deputation that waited on him about the sugar bounties betrays a certain deference to this feeling. Its further developments will be waited with curiosity."

debate." In his youth he had seen service as a soldier, and at one time had been private secretary to George Canning, who had married a sister of the Duchess of Portland; he had long been on the turf, and had occupied himself with pursuits not generally associated with the drudgery and application of statesmanship; disgusted, in the first instance, with the conduct of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel towards Canning, he withdrew his support from the Tories and upheld the policy of the Whigs; on the secession of Lord Stanley he became a member of the great Conservative Opposition until, again disgusted with the "treachery" of Sir Robert Peel, he enrolled himself amongst the Protectionists, and, from his name and talents, was raised to the position of leader of the deserted cause. "During three years," writes Mr. Disraeli, "under circumstances of great difficulty, he displayed some of the highest qualities of political life; courage and a lofty spirit; a mastery of details which experience usually alone confers; a quick apprehension and a clear intelligence; indomitable firmness; promptness, punctuality, and perseverance which never failed; an energy seldom surpassed; and a capacity for labour which was perhaps never equalled." Still, in spite of these gifts, it is very doubtful whether, if it had not been for the advocacy of Mr. Disraeli, the Protectionists would have been able to make common cause against the prime minister, and finally drive him from power. It was the eloquence, the wit, the sarcasms of the member for Shrewsbury, and of him alone, that made the Protectionists formidable, and under his splendid generalship transformed them from a section into a party, and led them on to a victory they had never dreamed of. Like a second Coriolanus, he could say, "Alone I did it."

After Peel's restoration to power, Mr. Disraeli at once showed the course he intended to pursue. At the meeting of the Houses, there was an angry debate on the address, and the speech of the member

for Shrewsbury was certainly not inclined to throw oil upon the troubled waters. He opened fire by congratulating the eminent statesman at the head of the government, who having served under four sovereigns, yet only during the last three years had found it necessary to change his convictions on that important topic—the corn laws—which must have presented itself for more than a quarter of a century to his consideration. Then in one of his happiest similes, he compared the policy of Peel to that of a renegade servant of the sultan. “Sir,” he cried, addressing the Speaker amid the cheers and laughter of the House, “there is a difficulty in finding a parallel to the position of the right hon. gentleman in any part of history. The only parallel which I can find is an incident in the late war in the Levant, which was terminated by the policy of the noble lord opposite. I remember when that great struggle was taking place, when the existence of the Turkish empire was at stake, the late sultan, a man of great energy and fertile in resources, was determined to fit out an immense fleet to maintain his empire. Accordingly a vast armament was collected. It consisted of many of the finest ships that were ever built. The crews were picked men, the officers were the ablest that could be found, and both officers and men were rewarded before they fought. There never was an armament which left the Dardanelles similarly appointed since the day of Solyman the Great. The sultan personally witnessed the departure of the fleet; all the muftis prayed for the success of the expedition, as all the muftis here prayed for the success of the last general election. Away went the fleet; but what was the sultan’s consternation when the lord high admiral steered at once into the enemy’s port! Now, sir, the lord high admiral on that occasion was very much misrepresented. He, too, was called a traitor and he, too, vindicated himself. ‘True it is,’ said he, ‘I did place myself at the head of this valiant armada—true it is that my sovereign embraced

me—true it is that all the muftis in the empire offered up prayers for my success; but I have an objection to war. I see no use in prolonging the struggle, and the only reason I had for accepting the command was that I might terminate the contest by betraying my master.’ And, sir, these reasons offered by a man of great plausibility, of vast adroitness, have had their effect; for you may be surprised at it, but I assure you it is a fact—which, by the way, the gallant officer opposite (Commander Napier) can testify—that he is at this moment the first lord of the admiralty at Constantinople, under the new reign.”

Then proceeding with his caustic criticisms, he sneered at Peel’s famous advice about registration, which simply meant, he said, “that we were to register to make him a minister;” he described the premier as a man who never originated an idea, a watcher of the atmosphere, and no more entitled to be called a great statesman than the man who got up behind a carriage was entitled to be called a great whip. “Do not then,” he cried, “because you see a great personage giving up his opinions, do not cheer him on, do not yield so ready a reward to political tergiversation. Above all, maintain the line of demarcation between parties; for it is only by maintaining the independence of party that you can maintain the integrity of public men and the power and influence of parliament itself.”

But the attack in which all these minor onslaughts culminated was reserved for the third night of the debate on the repeal of the corn laws. An English audience, though from certain intellectual imperfections it fails to appreciate the incisive invective of French satire, likes hard hitting; and it must be confessed that on that memorable night, the night of May 15, 1846, Mr. Disraeli hit very hard—still it was legitimate fighting, there were no blows below the belt, all were delivered straight from the shoulder, and every stroke told. Mr. Disraeli was not a combative man, but when he fought he fought in earnest; he did not

play with his weapons, nor did he fence with the buttons on his foils. His speech, even at this distance of time, and upon a subject which is never likely to be revived, is full of interest on account of its severity and its smartness. He was not, he said, one of those who had ever spoken with disrespect of that commercial confederation which now exercised so great an influence in this country. Though he disapproved of their doctrines, though he believed from the bottom of his heart that their practice would eventually be as pernicious to the manufacturing interest as to the agricultural interest of this country, still he admired men of abilities who, convinced of a great truth and proud of their energies, banded themselves together for the purpose of supporting it, and came forward devoting their lives to what they considered to be a great cause. This country could only exist by free discussion. If it were once supposed that opinions were to be put down by any other means, then, whatever might be our political opinions, liberty vanished. If they thought the opinions of the Anti-Corn Law League dangerous, if they thought their system was founded on error and must lead to confusion, it was open in a free country like England, for men who held opposite ideas, to resist the League with the same earnestness by all legitimate means—by the same active organization, and by all the intellectual power they could command. But what had happened on this occasion? A body of gentlemen, able and adroit men, came forward and professed contrary doctrines to those of these new economists. They placed themselves at the head of that great popular party who were adverse to their ideas, and professing their opinions, they climbed and clambered into power by having accepted, or rather by having eagerly sought the trust. Hence it followed that the body whom they represented, trusting in their leaders, not unnaturally slumbered at their posts. They concluded that their opinions were repre-

sented in the state. It was not for them or the millions outside the House to come forward and organize a power, in order to meet the hostile movements of Mr. Cobden. No, they trusted to others—to one who, by accepting or rather by seizing that post, obtained the greatest place in the country, and at that moment governed England. And now what had happened? The right honourable gentleman, the first minister, had betrayed his friends, and had sold his party. Let him congratulate himself upon his complete success in having deceived those who so implicitly trusted in him.

This was severe, but the sting was to follow. The conclusion of the speech is too exquisite to admit of extract or compression.

"And now, sir," he said, with folded arms and with that modest downcast look which generally preceded something very pungent and humorous, "And now, sir, I must say, in vindication of the right hon. gentleman, that I think great injustice has been done to him throughout these debates. A perhaps justifiable misconception has universally prevailed. Sir, the right hon. gentleman has been accused of foregone treachery—of long-meditated deception—of a desire unworthy of a great statesman, even if an unprincipled one, of always having intended to abandon the opinions by professing which he rose to power. Sir, I entirely acquit the right hon. gentleman of any such intention. I do it for this reason, that when I examine the career of this minister, which has now filled a great space in the parliamentary history of this country, I find that for between thirty and forty years, from the days of Mr. Horner to the days of the hon. member for Stockport, that right hon. gentleman has traded on the ideas and intelligence of others. His life has been one great appropriation clause. He is a burglar of others' intellect. Search the index of Beatson, from the days of the Conqueror to the termination of the last reign, there is no statesman who has committed political petty larceny on so great a scale. I believe, therefore, when

the right hon. gentleman undertook our cause on either side of the House, that he was perfectly sincere in his advocacy; but as, in the course of discussion, the conventionalisms which he received from us crumbled away in his grasp, feeling no creative power to sustain him with new arguments, feeling no spontaneous sentiments to force upon him conviction, reduced at last to defending the noblest cause, one based on the most high and solemn principles, upon the 'burdens peculiar to agriculture'—the right hon. gentleman, faithful to the law of his nature, imbibed the new doctrines, the more vigorous, bustling, popular, and progressive doctrines, as he had imbibed the doctrines of Mr. Horner—as he had imbibed the doctrines of every leading man in this country for thirty or forty years, with the exception of the doctrine of parliamentary reform, which the Whigs very wisely led the country upon, and did not allow to grow sufficiently mature to fall into the mouth of the right hon. gentleman. Sir, the right hon. gentleman tells us that he does not feel humiliated. Sir, it is impossible for any one to know what are the feelings of another. Feeling depends upon temperament: it depends upon the organization of the animal that feels. But this I will tell the right hon. gentleman, that though he may not feel humiliated, his country ought to feel humiliated. Is it so pleasing to the self-complacency of a great nation, is it so grateful to the pride of England, that one who, from the position he has contrived to occupy, must rank as her foremost citizen, is one of whom it may be said, as Dean Swift said of another minister, that 'he is a gentleman who has the perpetual misfortune to be mistaken!' And, sir, even now, in this last scene of the drama, when the party whom he unintentionally betrayed is to be unintentionally annihilated—even now, in this the last scene, the right hon. gentleman, faithful to the law of his being, is going to ~~propose~~ a project which, I believe it is matter of notoriety, is not of his own invention.

It is one which may have been modified, but which I believe has been offered to another government, and by that government has been wisely rejected. Why, sir, these are matters of general notoriety. After the day that the right hon. gentleman made his first exposition of his scheme, a gentleman well known in this House, and learned in all the political secrets behind the scenes, met me, and said, 'Well, what do you think of your chief's plan?' Not knowing exactly what to say, but taking up a phrase which has been much used in the House, I observed, 'Well, I suppose it's a "great and comprehensive" plan.' 'Oh!' he replied, 'we know all about it! It was offered to us! It is not his plan; it's Popkins' plan!' And is England to be governed by 'Popkins' plan?' Will he go to the country with it? Will he go with it to that ancient and famous England that once was governed by statesmen—by Burleighs and by Walsinghams, by Bolingbrokes and by Walpoles, by a Chatham and a Canning—will he go to it with this fantastic scheming of some presumptuous pedant? I will not believe it. I have that confidence in the common sense, I will say the common spirit of our countrymen, that I believe they will not long endure this huckstering tyranny of the treasury bench—these political pedlars that bought their party in the cheapest market, and sold us in the dearest.

"I know, sir, that there are many who believe that the time is gone by when one can appeal to those high and honest impulses that were once the mainstay and the main element of the English character. I know, sir, that we appeal to a people debauched by public gambling—stimulated and encouraged by an inefficient and short-sighted minister. I know that the public mind is polluted with economic fancies; a depraved desire that the rich may become richer without the interference of industry and toil. I know, sir, that all confidence in public men is lost. But, sir, I have faith in the primitive and enduring elements

of the English character. It may be vain now, in the midnight of their intoxication, to tell them that there will be an awakening of bitterness ; it may be idle now, in the spring-tide of their economic frenzy, to warn them that there may be an ebb of trouble. But the dark and inevitable hour will arrive. Then, when their spirit is softened by misfortune, they will recur to those principles that made England great, and which, in our belief, can alone keep England great. Then, too, perchance they may remember, not with unkindness, those who, betrayed and deserted, were neither ashamed nor afraid to struggle for the 'good old cause'—the cause with which are associated principles the most popular, sentiments the most entirely national—the cause of labour—the cause of the people—the cause of England."

We know the result. The debate, after having occupied the 11th and 12th of May, was adjourned to the 15th of that month, "when, after a discussion of perhaps unexampled excitement in the House of Commons, the division was called at four o'clock in the morning of Saturday, and, in a House of 560 members, the third reading of the Bill for the Repeal of the Corn Laws was carried by a majority of 98."

The conduct of Sir Robert Peel on this memorable occasion has, as we all know, given rise to much comment and adverse criticism ; yet, after a careful review of the state of affairs at that date, and making every allowance for the soured hopes of the Protectionists, it seems to us that harsher measure has been dealt out to him than he deserved. The career of Peel is certainly one open to criticism. As we read his life we are dazzled by no great brilliancy of intellectual power ; our pulse does not beat with a quicker throb as we listen to generous thoughts and watch the deeds which elevate men above the dead level of human nature. There is little that is great or noble or chivalrous in his career. Yet, on the other hand, though narrow, commonplace, and perhaps selfish, we can find nothing which

reflects upon his political character. He changed his opinions, but he frankly owned the reasons why he changed them ; and though those reasons prove him to be short-sighted and hasty in arriving at his conclusions, yet his honour passes through the trial unscathed. It is unfortunate for a statesman to be perpetually mistaken ; but it is certainly better for him to candidly avow that his judgment has been in error than to pursue a policy which he knows to be mischievous, in order to save appearances, and to preserve a culpable consistency. Sir Robert Peel has been accused of treachery for the part he played in repealing the corn laws; but was it possible for him to play any other part, considering the position in which he was placed, and bearing in mind that human nature is not devoid of ambition ? He had changed his views with regard to agrarian protection, for on examination he had found that the corn laws were impracticable. He had compared the results of periods of abundance and low prices with periods of scarcity and high prices, and he had come to the conclusion that protection was not tenable. He did not believe that the rate of wages varied with the price of food, or that with high prices wages would necessarily vary in the same ratio. He saw that protection, according to his view of the question, was pernicious. It had been said that because England laboured under a heavy debt and high rate of taxation, she must be protected from competition with foreign industry. He argued differently, for the experience of the last three years had taught him that "a large debt and heavy taxation were best encountered by abundance and cheapness of provisions, which rather alleviated than added to the burden."

Converted to this view—for conversion was not with him a rare occurrence—he endeavoured to impress his own opinions upon his colleagues, but without success. Then feeling that it was impossible for him to oppose any longer the repeal of the corn laws, he tendered his

resignation. Lord John Russell, as we have seen, was unable to constitute a cabinet. The Protectionists under Lord Stanley were not strong enough to take office. Consequently Sir Robert Peel was again sent for, and it fell to him to repeal the hated impost. Where was the treachery? He had avowed his change of opinion; and for the matter of that, if he had changed his opinions upon free trade, so had Lord John Russell; he had endeavoured to bring his cabinet to his way of thinking; he had failed in the attempt, and had given his opponents the opportunity both of abolishing the restrictions upon corn and of confirming the principles of protection; his rivals were unable to avail themselves of his offer, and thus it became his duty to be the instrument in passing this great measure. Where was the treachery? "It appears to me," writes Lord Dalling and Bulwer, "that the fact that he had resigned office on changing his policy, and that he did not return to it until every other ministerial combination had failed, rendered his course on this occasion more clear than on the Catholic question. To accuse him under such circumstances of changing his views, in order to retain his office, is as absurd as unjust. He is not even subject to the charge of retaining power after changing the opinions that he entertained on receiving it. His conduct appears to me to have been dictated by the purest patriotism, and the most complete sacrifice of personal ambition to public motive." Nor did he take credit where it was not due. The repeal of the corn laws was not owing to the efforts of Lord John Russell, nor to the support of the Whigs, nor to the advocacy of Peel and the party he led. "The name," cried Sir Robert, "which ought to be, and will be, associated with the success of these measures, is the name of one who, acting I believe from pure and from disinterested motives, has with untiring energy made appeals to our reason, and has enforced those appeals with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and

unadorned. The name which ought to be chiefly associated with the success of these measures is the name of Richard Cobden."

The Protectionists, however, declined to take this view of the prime minister. He had divided the party in twain, and had deserted the cause which had placed him in power. He was a traitor, an apostate, a scheming adventurer. One hope now animated their breasts—the hope of revenge. "Proud in their numbers," writes Mr. Disraeli, in his biography of Lord George Bentinck, "confident in their discipline, and elate with their memorable resistance, the protectionist party as a body had always assumed that when the occasion was ripe the career of the minister might be terminated." But how was it to be terminated? How was Sir Robert Peel to be turned out? This was the great question which occupied the musing hours of a Whitsun recess. After much deliberation, it was resolved to oppose the Irish Coercion Bill, which Peel had introduced as a measure of urgent necessity, and had then shelved until the passing of the Corn Bill, in order not to irritate the Irish faction. The Protectionists had never approved of the Coercion Bill; but beneath the magic wand of Peel they had agreed to its first reading. They now resolved to unite with the Whigs and defeat the measure on the second reading. "It is time," cried Lord George Bentinck, "that atonement should be made to the betrayed honour of parliament and the betrayed constituencies of the empire. . . . The time has now come when they who love the treason that has recently been committed, though they hate the traitor, should join with those who sit on the protectionist benches, in showing that they do not approve the recent conduct of ministers." This vindictive cry was no idle threat. The bill came before the House for the second reading. Member after member rose up to advocate it or to oppose it. Then at a late hour of the night the galleries were cleared, the division called, and the question put. We have an account

of the memorable scene that ensued from the pen of Mr. Disraeli, who was a witness of the event he so graphically describes :—

"In almost all previous divisions," he writes, "where the fate of a government had been depending, the vote of every member with scarcely an exception had been anticipated : that was not the case in the present instance, and the direction which members took as they left their seats was anxiously watched. More than a hundred protectionist members followed the minister ; more than eighty avoided the division, a few of these, however, had paired ; nearly the same number followed Lord George Bentinck. But it was not merely their numbers that attracted the anxious observation of the treasury bench as the Protectionists passed in defile before the minister to the hostile lobby. It was impossible that he could have marked them without emotion : the flower of that great party which had been so proud to follow one who had been so proud to lead them. They were men, to gain whose hearts and the hearts of their fathers had been the aim and exultation of his life. They had extended to him an unlimited confidence and an admiration without stint. They had stood by him in the darkest hour, and had borne him from the depths of political despair to the proudest of living positions. Right or wrong, they were men of honour, breeding, and refinement, high and generous character, great weight and station in the country, which they had ever placed at his disposal. They had been not only his followers, but his friends ; had joined in the same pastimes, drank from the same cup, and in the pleasantness of private life had often forgotten together the cares and strife of politics.

"He must have felt something of this, while the Manners, the Somersets, the Bentincks, the Lowthers, and the Lennoxes, passed before him. And those country gentlemen, 'those gentlemen of England,' of whom, but five years ago, the very same building was ringing with his pride of being the leader—if his heart were hardened to

Sir Charles Burrell, Sir William Jolliffe, Sir Charles Knightly, Sir John Trollope, Sir Edward Kerrison, Sir John Tyrell, he surely must have had a pang when his eye rested on Sir John Yarde Buller, his choice and pattern country gentleman, whom he had himself selected and invited but six years back to move a vote of want of confidence in the Whig government, in order, against the feeling of the court, to install Sir Robert Peel in their stead.

"They trooped on, all the men of metal and large-acred squires, whose spirit he had so often quickened, and whose counsel he had so often solicited in his fine Conservative speeches in Whitehall Gardens—Mr. Bankes, with a parliamentary name of two centuries, and Mr. Christopher, from that broad Lincolnshire which protection had created ; and the Mileses and the Henleys were there ; and the Duncombes, the Liddells, and the Yorkes ; and Devon had sent there the stout heart of Mr. Buck ; and Wiltshire, the pleasant presence of Walter Long. Mr. Newdegate was there, whom Sir Robert had himself recommended to the confidence of the electors of Warwickshire, as one of whom he had the highest hopes ; and Mr. Alderman Thompson was there, who, also through Sir Robert's selection, had seconded the assault upon the Whigs, led on by Sir John Buller. But the list is too long; or good names remain behind.

"When Prince Metternich was informed at Dresden, with great ostentation, that the emperor had arrived—'Yes, but without his army,' was the reply. Sir Robert Peel was still first minister of England, as Napoleon remained emperor for a while after Moscow. Each perhaps for a moment had indulged in hope. It is so difficult for those who are on the pinnacle of life to realize disaster. They sometimes contemplate it in their deep and far-seeing calculations, but it is only to imagine a contingency which their resources must surely baffle ; they sometimes talk of it to their friends, and oftener of it to their enemies, but it is

only as an insurance of their prosperity and as an offering to propitiate their Nemesis. They never believe in it.

"The news that the government were not only beaten, but by a majority so large as 73, began to circulate. An incredulous murmur passed it along the treasury bench.

"'They say we are beaten by 73 !' whispered the most important member of the cabinet in a tone of surprise to Sir Robert Peel.

"Sir Robert did not reply or even turn his head. He looked very grave, and extended his chin, as was his habit when he was annoyed and cared not to speak. He began to comprehend his position, and that the emperor was without his army."

He had lost his army, and he went to Windsor to deliver up the seals of office. On June 29 he informed the House that the queen had accepted the resignation of the cabinet. In withdrawing from his position he briefly reviewed the proceedings of the last five years. He regretted the loss of those who had seceded from him; yet, in carrying the measure which had led to his fall from power, he had been actuated alone by a desire to promote the best interests of the country. He spoke of his defeat as an event not to be regretted, but to be accepted as a just chastisement of his error in having supported principles which he had been

compelled to abandon. His closing words were among the most impressive that had ever fallen from his lips:—

"In relinquishing power," he said in his most solemn tones, and amid the stillest silence, "I shall leave a name severely censured, I fear, by many who, on public grounds, deeply regret the severance of party ties—deeply regret that severance, not from interested or party motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements—the existence and maintenance of a great party—constitutes a powerful instrument of government. I shall surrender power severely censured also by others who, from no interested motives, adhere to the principle of protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country; I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who, from less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice."

CHAPTER V.

WHIG ASCENDANCY.

ON the resignation of Sir Robert Peel, an administration was formed under Lord John Russell, who, of course, took office as first lord of the treasury. Lord Palmerston, who had already made a reputation for himself as a minister, who would not truckle to a foreign power, though the tendency of his policy was then too much towards unnecessary interference, held the seals again as foreign secretary; that dreariest of debaters, but most painstaking of administrators, Sir Charles Wood, controlled our finances as chancellor of the exchequer; Sir George Grey presided over the home office; and Lord Grey was colonial secretary. With the exception of the prime minister and Lord Palmerston, the cabinet was certainly not a brilliant one, and it required all its eloquence and administrative capacity to deal with the grave questions which were springing up on every side, and overclouding with their ominous shade the political horizon. The stability of the government was dependent entirely upon the continuance of the feud between the ex-premier and the protectionists. Three great parties represented the feeling of the House: the Whigs, who were in power; the Conservatives, who still adhered to the fallen fortunes of Sir Robert Peel; and the Protectionists, under the nominal leadership of Lord George Bentinck. Thus on any measure brought up for discussion, a fusion between the Peelites and the Protectionists would place the government in a minority. Sir Robert Peel, however, had no intention of bridging over the existing breach; for he knew that if the Conservatives came into power, he could not hope to be reinstated as head of the cabinet. He resolved, therefore, to support the policy of Lord John Russell. "Peel,"

writes Lord Palmerston, "seems to have made up his mind that, for a year or two, he cannot hope to form a party, and that he must give people a certain time to forget the events of last year; in the meanwhile, it is evident that he does not wish that any other government should be formed out of the people on his side of the House, because of that government he would not be a member. For these reasons, and also because he sincerely thinks it best that we should for the present remain in, he gives us very cordial support, as far as he can without losing his independent position."

On taking his seat in the House of Commons, at the meeting of parliament, Nov. 18, 1847, Mr. Disraeli had ceased to represent Shrewsbury. His brilliant defence of the agricultural interest, the co-leadership he enjoyed with Lord George Bentinck, and the influence he possessed over the Protectionists, all marked him out for the position of a knight of the shire. It was felt that the spokesman of the party which watched over the welfare of the agricultural interest should represent no constituency less than that of a county. By the purchase of his small but charming estate of Hughenden Manor, Mr. Disraeli was now enrolled among the landed gentry of his beloved Buckinghamshire. He was asked to stand for the county, and he gladly accepted the invitation. In his address he alluded to the repeal of the corn laws; he disapproved of that measure. "Notwithstanding this, however, I am not one of those who would abet or attempt factiously or forcibly to repeal the measure of 1846." He appeared before them not as the organ of any section or the nominee of any individual. "All that I can offer you," he

said, "is the devotion of such energies as I possess; all that I aspire to is to serve you as becomes the representative of a great, undivided, and historic county, that has achieved vast results for our popular liberty, our parliamentary reputation, and our national greatness." Then he flattered local vanity, and made the hearts of his Buckinghamshire hearers swell with honest pride. "The parliamentary constitution of England," he cried, "was born in the bosom of the Chiltern Hills, as to this day our parliamentary career is terminated amongst its Hundreds. The parliamentary constitution of England was established when Mr. Hampden rode up to Westminster, surrounded by his neighbours. Buckinghamshire did that for England. It has done more. It gave us the British constitution in the seventeenth century, and it created the British empire in the eighteenth. All the great statesmen of that century were born, or bred, or lived in the county. Throw your eye over the list—it is a glorious one—from Shelburne to Granville. Travel from Wycombe to Buckingham, from the first Lord Lansdowne, the most accomplished minister this country ever produced, to the last of our classic statesmen. Even the sovereign genius of Chat-ham was nursed in the groves of Stowe and the *templa quam dilecta* of Cobham, and it was beneath his oaks at Beaconsfield that Mr. Burke poured forth those divine effusions that vindicated the social system and reconciled the authority of law with the liberty of men. And in our time, faithful to its character and its mission, amid a great parliamentary revolution, Buckingham called a new political class into existence, and enfranchised you and the farmers of England by the Chandos clause."

Mr. Disraeli was returned without opposition, and as long as he sat in the House of Commons the county of Bucks was ever loyal to him. He never had occasion to represent any other constituency.

He was no silent member. Upon all the leading measures advocated by the govern-

ment, the voice of Mr. Disraeli was heard. He sympathized with the half-ruined owners of sugar plantations in our West India islands, and opposed the proposal that sugars, which were the produce of slave labour, and sugars the produce of free labour, should be admitted into the home market on a footing of perfect equality. "Having deprived our colonies," he said, "of those successful means of general competition, it would seem that the metropolis was at least bound to secure them a home market. If the consequence of such a monopoly were a dear article, the increased price must be considered as an amercement for the luxury of a philanthropy not sufficiently informed of the complicated circumstances with which it had to deal. . . . The movement of the middle classes for the abolition of slavery was virtuous, but it was not wise. It was an ignorant movement. It showed a want of knowledge both of the laws of commerce and the stipulations of treaties; and it has alike ruined the colonies and aggravated the slave trade. . . . The plea of the free-traders for the admission of slave-grown sugar, on the ground of inconsistency in excluding it since we admitted other products of slave-grown labour, can be characterized only by an epithet too harsh for polite composition when we recollect that, when the whole community shrunk from the abomination of consuming the slave-grown sugar of our own colonies, they had then for years, nay, in some instances almost for centuries, been in the habit of drinking slave-grown coffee, smoking slave-grown tobacco, and spinning slave-grown cotton. They therefore took their resolution with a full knowledge of these inconsistent accessories. The history of the abolition of slavery by the English and its consequences would be a narrative of ignorance, injustice, blundering, waste, and havoc, not easily paralleled in the history of mankind."

He also warmly supported the measure of Lord George Bentinck for intersecting Ireland with railways, the expense of constructing which was to be shared between

private companies and the government. By this means a handsome dividend would be returned to shareholders, whilst ample work would be found for the idle and destitute Irish. The proposal was, however, opposed by the government, though they so far expressed their approval of its principle by borrowing some of the details of the scheme a few months afterwards. When a period of severe commercial distress had set in, and the government were at their wit's end, hesitating whether to suspend the Bank Charter Act or not, Mr. Disraeli explained that the state of the country was nothing less than the logical result of free trade, which, as then conducted, had caused a perpetual outflow of gold in order to purchase corn and other goods which foreign nations declined to sell or barter. In a careful speech he reviewed the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston, and argued that the power of England, if exercised in a proper and judicious manner, was an influence that no foreign nation could ignore. "England," he said, alluding to the alleged influence of France in Spain, and Russia in Germany, "England held the balance, and if she was conscious of her position, and exerted her influence with firmness and discretion, she might obtain and enjoy the blessings of peace, and hand them down to posterity." These remarks he made especially to apply to the Spanish marriages and the extinction of the free state of Cracow by Russia, in direct violation of the treaty of Vienna.

A question now came before the House which, since it appealed very closely to the toleration which was one of the chief features of Mr. Disraeli's political creed and to those sympathies with his race which he had never hesitated to express, is deserving of fuller treatment. At the recent general election the citizens of London had thought fit to return as one of their representatives Baron Rothschild, a Hebrew merchant of great wealth and high standing in the city; and Lord John Russell, also one of the members of the

metropolis, had pledged himself to procure admission for his new colleague into the House of Commons. As the law then stood, the doors of parliament were closed to all who refused to declare their acceptance of the clauses contained in the oath necessary for admission "on the true faith of a Christian." This reservation naturally excluded all Jews from entertaining the hope of parliamentary honours, and though the matter had often been discussed by the House, the feeling of the majority was against the expelling clause being rescinded. The question now arose whether Baron Rothschild should be admitted without being compelled to subscribe to this form of oath. An important debate was expected which would call forth all the passions and prejudices of men, and the result of the controversy was looked for with no little interest, and on the part of the more conservative of the population, with some trepidation. Of late years religious toleration had made advances; the Roman Catholic had been emancipated, and the Test and Corporation Acts had been repealed. But the Papist, however superstitious, and the Dissenter, however narrow-minded, were both Christians; thus there was nothing inconsistent in permitting them to have a part in the legislation of a Christian country.

To admit the Jew was, however, to assert the principle that there was no necessary connection between politics and Christianity, and that the English constitution was based on religious equality. Yet the existence of a church by law established plainly contradicts this principle of equality. By the Act of Settlement it has been laid down that the sovereign of these realms must be one in communion with the Church of England. Archbishops and bishops of the Church of England, and the ministers of no other religious organization, constitute an essential element in the composition of the House of Lords. Clergymen of the Church of England, and they alone, are ineligible for the House of Commons, whilst ministers

of other bodies can be freely elected. Again, every citizen who does not profess a creed is legally supposed to be a member of the Established Church, while no such presumption is ever raised in favour of any other religious community. We must also remember that we are dealing with a time when the Divorce Court was not established, when church rates were levied, when the Irish Church was still in existence, when the Universities Tests Acts had not been repealed, when in fact the Established Church of England was the sacred ark on which no man should lay hands profanely. The admission of the Jew into the legislature touched therefore the very quick of our religious belief. At one time it had been necessary for a member of parliament to be a follower of the teaching of the Church of England; then the principle of toleration had been extended to admit the Roman Catholic and the Dissenter; and now it was argued that toleration should dissolve itself into a religious equality contrary to the principles of the English constitution, and that men who denied the very foundation stone upon which the Christian church was erected were to be suffered to make the laws of a Christian people. It is therefore not surprising that the measure of Lord John Russell gave rise to considerable opposition. It was asked where would the legislature draw the line as to toleration? The Church of England had been dethroned from her proud pre-eminence; Roman Catholics had entered the House of Commons; Dissenters had followed them; Jews were now to be admitted; what was to prevent the doors being opened—a question by the way now being freely discussed—to atheists and free thinkers? Mr. Gladstone had written a book to prove the necessity of the union between church and state; the church was to be the Church of England, and the state was to be guided and protected by her teaching. His book had a wide circulation amongst Conservatives, and its principles were cordially approved of.

Upon the question of the admission of the Jews, Mr. Disraeli differed from the majority of the party that his genius and statesmanship had organized. He held that it was unjust to exclude from the honours of British legislation men who were born British subjects, who were few in number, whose loyalty had never been impeached, and who believed in the faith upon which Christianity had been founded. He maintained that mankind was under deep obligations to the Jews, and therefore ought, in common gratitude, to render them every privilege. "The Saxon, the Slav, and the Celt," he writes, in the memorable chapter upon his race in his biography of Lord George Bentinck, "have adopted most of the laws and many of the customs of these Arabian tribes, all their literature and all their religion. They are therefore indebted to them for much that regulates, much that charms, and much that solaces existence. The toiling multitude rest every seventh day by virtue of a Jewish law; they are perpetually reading, 'for their example,' the records of Jewish history, and singing the odes and elegies of Jewish poets; and they daily acknowledge on their knees, with reverent gratitude, that the only medium of communication between the Creator and themselves is the Jewish race. Yet they treat that race as the vilest of generations; and instead of logically looking upon them as the human family that has contributed most to human happiness, they extend to them every term of obloquy and every form of persecution." He denied, too, the truth of the common accusation that the dispersion of the Hebrew race was a penalty incurred for the crucifixion of our Redeemer by the Romans at Jerusalem, and at the instigation of some Jews in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. Such a charge, he argued, was neither historically true nor dogmatically sound. It was not historically true, because the Jewish race at the time of the advent of our Lord was as much dispersed throughout the world as at the present time, and had been so for many centuries.

Consequently, the bulk of the Hebrew nation had no share in the act of the crucifixion. Nor was it historically true that the small section of the Jewish race which dwelt in Palestine rejected the Christ. The reverse was the truth. "Had it," writes Mr. Disraeli, "not been for the Jews of Palestine the good tidings of our Lord would have been unknown for ever to the northern and western races. The first preachers of the gospel were Jews, and none else. No one has ever been permitted to write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit except a Jew. For nearly a century no one believed in the good tidings except Jews. They nursed the sacred flame of which they were the consecrated and hereditary depositaries. And when the time was ripe to diffuse the truth among the ethnicks, it was not a senator of Rome or a philosopher of Athens who was personally appointed by our Lord for that office, but a Jew of Tarsus, who founded the seven churches of Asia. And that greater church, great even amid its terrible corruptions, that has avenged the victory of Titus by subjugating the capital of the Cæsars, and has changed every one of the Olympian temples into altars of the God of Sinai and of Calvary, was founded by another Jew, a Jew of Galilee."

Thus the dispersion of the Jews, preceding as it did for ages the coming of our Saviour, could not, argues our author, be on account of behaviour which occurred after the advent. Nor were the Jews, he says, guilty of that subsequent conduct which has been imputed to them as a crime, since for Him and His blessed name they preached and wrote and shed their blood as "witnesses." And precisely as the charges against Israel were not historically correct, so were they neither dogmatically sound. There is no passage in Holy Writ, contends Mr. Disraeli, which in the slightest degree warrants the penal assumption. The imprecation of the mob at the crucifixion has been sometimes strangely quoted as a divine decree. But is it a principle of jurisprudence, human

or inspired, to permit criminals to ordain their own punishment? Why, too, should they transfer any portion of the infliction to their posterity? What evidence have we that the wild suggestion was sanctioned by Omnipotence? On the contrary, amid the expiating agony, a divine voice at the same time solicited a secured forgiveness. And if unforgiven, could the cry of a rabble, inquires Mr. Disraeli, at such a scene bind a nation? Then he proceeds to put the question which Christian philosophy can only answer by referring it to the faith which will one day solve the inexplicable, and render sound the apparently illogical. "If the Jews," writes Mr. Disraeli, "had not prevailed upon the Romans to crucify our Lord, what would have become of the Atonement? But the human mind cannot contemplate the idea that the most important deed of time could depend upon human will. The immolators were pre-ordained like the victim, and the holy race supplied both. Could that be a crime which secured for all mankind eternal joy—which vanquished Satan, and opened the gates of Paradise? Such a tenet would sully and impugn the doctrine that is the corner-stone of our faith and hope. Men must not presume to sit in judgment on such an act. They must bow their heads in awe and astonishment and trembling gratitude."

Having argued that our Christianity is only the completion of Judaism, that it is to Jews that we owe the preservation of the sacred writings, and, above all, that it is to a Jew we are indebted for the hope of eternal salvation, Mr. Disraeli further discusses our indebtedness to the Hebrew race. Were it not, he says, for music, it might be thought that the Beautiful was dead. And who, pray, he asks, are the great composers whose works rank with the transcendent creations of human genius? "They are the descendants of those Arabian tribes who conquered Canaan, and who by favour of the Most High have done more with less means even than the Athenians." In art,

in science, in philosophy, the Jews have equally excelled. They are the trustees of tradition and the conservators of the religious element. They are a living and the most striking evidence of the falsity of that pernicious doctrine of modern times, the natural equality of man. All the tendencies of the Hebrew race, says Mr. Disraeli, are conservative. Their bias is to religion, property, and natural aristocracy. It should, therefore, be the interest of statesmen that this bias of a great race should be encouraged, and their energies and creative powers enlisted in the cause of existing society. In conclusion, the writer warns us, that nations have prospered or fallen according to their treatment of the Hebrew race. "It may be observed," he writes, "that the decline and disasters of modern communities have generally been relative to their degree of sedition against the Semitic principle. Since the great revolt of the Celts against the first and second testament, at the close of the last century, France has been alternately in a state of collapse or convulsion. Throughout the awful trials of the last sixty years, England, notwithstanding her deficient and meagre theology, has always remembered Sion. The great transatlantic republic is intensely Semitic, and has prospered accordingly. This sacred principle alone has consolidated the mighty empire of all the Russias. How omnipotent it is cannot be more clearly shown than by the instance of Rome, where it appears in its most corrupt form. An old man on a Semitic throne baffles the modern Attilas and the recent invasion of the barbarians, under the form of red republicans, socialists, communists—all different phases which describe the relapse of the once converted races into their primitive condition of savagery. Austria would long ago have dissolved but for the Semitic principle, and if the north of Germany has never succeeded in attaining that imperial position which seemed its natural destiny, it is that the north of Germany has never at any time been thoroughly converted.

Some perhaps may point to Spain as a remarkable instance of decline in a country where the Semitic principle has exercised great influence. But the fall of Spain was occasioned by the expulsion of her Semitic population: a million families of Jews and Saracens, the most distinguished of her citizens for their industry and their intelligence, their learning and their wealth."

In whatever light we regard these opinions—whether we look upon them as proceeding from the distorted enthusiasm of one who was deeply attached to a race which has a splendid past, which has a persecuted present, and which is to have a glorious future; whether we consider the comparison between Judaism and Christianity as strained and false, and deny that Christianity is the completion of Judaism; whether we respect or sneer at "the Semitic principle," or whatever be the judgment we form upon the subject—certain it is that to Mr. Disraeli these views constituted the creed of his life. Sprung from a people whom he considered the "aristocracy of nature," he was essentially an aristocrat in the social and political opinions he held. He denied the theory as to the equality of man; he was a firm believer in "race;" he upheld the existence of a privileged class; in all his instincts he was, what he claims as the characteristic of his nation, conservative—the conservatism of one proud of his lineage, the conservatism of a cultured, tolerant man of the world. The jealous and the spiteful who saw Mr. Disraeli living in the society of the great, and for years representing the landed gentry of England, sneered at the son of the Hebrew man of letters for occupying a position he had no right to hold, and branded him with opprobrious epithets for his arrogance.

Yet, in the light Mr. Disraeli regarded himself, there was no presumption. In this country, which holds in such high estimation ancient race, the lineage of the member for Buckinghamshire could trace back further in the past than could the birth of any by whom

he was surrounded; therefore, in his eyes the social atmosphere of the high-born was the element it was quite his due to breathe. He came of a superior race. The very manner, he declared, in which the Hebrew had baffled the persecutions of the past proved his superiority, since he is the only one of pure race in existence who has outlived persecution; and it was but right, according to the laws of ethnology, for him to take his place amongst those who lead. Throughout his whole political career, we never find Mr. Disraeli apologizing for the lofty position he held, or saying, as meaner natures would, servile things to tickle the vanity of those who, though they followed him, yet in all probability considered themselves his social superiors. Addington, "the doctor," was very urbane and deferential to the great, as if aware of his social shortcomings; Canning had a strong leaven of toadyism in his nature; but the worst enemy of Mr. Disraeli never accused him of base flatteries, or the want of a noble self-respect. All the honours conferred on him appeared only as the ordinary result of cause and effect, as the tribute due to the really superior man. He led the Protectionists, he led the Tories, he led the nation, at one time he almost led Europe; he was a commoner, he became a peer; his coat of arms was a blank, yet on his breast glittered the star of a knight of the garter. Still throughout he was never fussily elated as to his position: his was an instance of the man who feels himself great because he knows he is worthy to be great. And apart from his genius, apart from his industry, he was conscious that he deserved this greatness, because he came from a line that had given to both sacred and secular history its most distinguished men—because in his veins there was the same blood as flowed in Him "who is the eternal glory of the Jewish race." There was no future too splendid he considered for one of the chosen people. When Canning made a brilliant marriage, Pitt, highly pleased, said it would

give his friend position. What the connection with the house of Portland was to George Canning, the connection with the house of David was to Benjamin Disraeli—it gave him, in his own estimation, "position."

When, therefore, in the December of 1847, Lord John Russell brought before the House of Commons his resolution to remove the disabilities of the Jews, Mr. Disraeli came boldly forward to support the measure. He expressed on this occasion very much the same opinions as he had maintained in his memoir of Lord George Bentinck, and in his novel of "*Tancred*." He declared that it was the duty of Christians to accord full civil rights to the Jews, since there was such an affinity between Judaism and Christianity. "For where," he asked, "is your Christianity if you do not believe in their Judaism?" There was no hostility, he said, on the part of the Jew to the Christian church, for he alone of all religious people did not proselytize. Why, then, should the Christian church be hostile to the Jew? By her teaching she had made the history of the Jews the most celebrated history in the world. On every sacred day she read to the people the exploits of Jewish heroes, the proofs of Jewish devotion, and she obeyed as the rule of her life the commandments given to the Jews. When she wished to express feelings of praise and thanksgiving, or to find expressions of solace in grief, she met with both in the works of the Jewish poets. "If you had not forgotten," he said, "what you owe to this people—if you were grateful for that literature which for thousands of years has brought so much instruction and so much consolation to the sons of men—you as Christians would be only too ready to seize the first opportunity of meeting the claims of those who profess this religion." It was entirely, he avowed, on religious grounds and on religious principles that he ventured to recommend this subject to the notice of the House. It was a question on which men, whatever might be the consequences, must speak what they

felt. It was not, he concluded, because he was of Hebrew origin, but because he was a Christian, that he would not take upon himself the responsibility "of excluding from the legislature those who were of the religion in the bosom of which his Lord and Saviour was born." Lord George Bentinck also spoke in favour of the resolution; but in spite of the advocacy of the two leaders of the Protectionists, the measure was not, as we know, then satisfactorily settled. Lord John Russell carried the second reading by a large majority; but when the Lords came to consider the clauses, the bill was thrown out. Subsequently Lord John made an attempt to bring Baron Rothschild into parliament by a mere vote of the House of Commons; but Mr. Disraeli, though his sympathies were strongly in favour of the movement, and though he was a friend of the baron, declined to support so unconstitutional a proceeding.

One important result, favourable to the rising fortunes of Mr. Disraeli, however, followed the debate on this subject. The country was not then ripe for the question of Jewish emancipation; and the Protectionists being principally composed of English country gentlemen, with the usual prejudices of their order against foreign intrusion, did not see why the constitution should be upset in order that a wealthy Hebrew merchant might have the honour of representing London. It was bad enough to admit a Roman Catholic, who divided his allegiance between the queen and the pope, and a Dissenter who made war upon the church to vent his radical jealousy; but to have the House swarming with Jew usurers and money-lenders, though within their veins they might have the blood of all the prophets and apostles to boot, was an extension of the principles of toleration not to be sanctioned for one moment. It was known that Lord George Bentinck, who was ever in favour of religious freedom, was about to vote for the resolution of Lord John Russell; and en-

deavours were made to turn him from his purpose, but in vain. Consequently murmurs and divisions arose amongst the Protectionists at the course their leader had pursued; and Lord George being a man of imperious nature, and then somewhat irritable from ill health, resigned the chieftainship of the Protectionists, leaving the conduct of affairs entirely in the hands of his able lieutenant. He was implored to reconsider his determination, "as one very detrimental to the cause to which he was devoted, and which would probably tend to the triumph of those whose policy he had attempted to defeat, and whose personal conduct he had at least succeeded in punishing." He replied that he would feel greatly relieved by a restoration to privacy and freedom, as he seriously doubted whether he was able to work on much longer. This answer was sufficient to prevent his followers from repeating their request. On being presented with an address signed by the Protectionists, he thus expressed himself:—

"The considerations which obliged me to surrender a post of honour which every independent and high-minded English gentleman has at all times prized above the highest rewards in the gift of the crown, 'the leadership of the country gentlemen of England,' will never influence me to swerve from any endeavours of which my poor abilities and bodily energies are capable in the promotion of the prosperity of all classes in the British empire at home and in the colonies, any more than they can ever make me forget the attachment, the friendship, and the enthusiastic support, of those who stood by me to the end of the death struggle for British interests and for English good faith and political honour, and to whose continued friendship and constancy I know I am indebted for this graceful and grateful compliment."

He was not, however, permitted long to devote his services to the state. A few months after his resignation he was found dead on the road, near Thoresby, the

seat of Lord Manvers, to which place he had walked over from Welbeck. He died of sheer exhaustion, a martyr to his love of doing thoroughly whatever he put his hand to. It is said that he often worked eighteen out of the four-and-twenty hours, mastering the details of blue-books, and taking no sustenance beyond a little tea and dry toast. "The labours of Lord George Bentinck," writes Mr. Disraeli, "had been supernatural, and one ought, perhaps, to have felt that it was impossible they could be continued on such a scale of exhaustion; but no friend could control his eager life in this respect; he obeyed the law of his vehement and fiery nature, being one of those men who, in whatever they undertake, know no medium, but will 'succeed or die.'"

It had been the wish of Mr. Disraeli, since he, too, had been guilty of the crime of voting for the removal of Jewish disabilities, to have followed the example of Lord George Bentinck, and to have abdicated the post he held with relation to the Protectionists. However, at the earnest request of Lord George, who said that such a proceeding would be indicative of schism, which it was most necessary to discourage, he abandoned the idea, and faced the treasury bench as the actual, though at that time not the recognized leader of the secessionists. As a critical member of the Opposition, and now the chief, however unwilling might be his followers, of a great party, he was soon to prove to the mixed band of Whigs and Peelites that he fully understood the responsibilities of his office, and that he was no blind or tame opponent of injudicious measures.* Parliament had reassembled,

February 23, 1848, and shortly after the meeting of the Houses, Lord John Russell rose up to propose an increase in that convenient but hated impost the income-tax, offering as his excuse for the augmentation, that owing to the ambitious designs of the princes of the house of Orleans, it had become necessary to enlarge our armaments. The leader of the Protectionists keenly criticised the proposal. He reminded the House that when, in 1842, the country had submitted to the imposition of the income tax, the Whigs had warmly denounced it as unprecedented, nay, even as unconstitutional; that when Sir Robert Peel had introduced the measure, he represented himself as being in communication with foreign powers for the establishment between them and Great Britain of treaties of reciprocity; and that the income tax was levied with the express purpose of carrying on the affairs of the country until those treaties should have been ratified. "Sir," he cried, "in all this the right honourable gentleman acted as great ministers had acted before him. He acted exactly as Mr. Pitt did in 1787; he followed entirely the example of Mr. Pitt, who pursued the principle of other great men who had preceded him—Lord Shel-

Buckinghamshire there existed the most complete confidence. For a time there was a kind of triumvirate leadership—Lord Granby, Mr. Herries, and Mr. Disraeli—of the Protectionists in the lower house, but it was throughout apparent that Mr. Disraeli was the actual leader. A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* thus describes the situation of affairs:—"Mr. Disraeli's position towards the party itself, unanimous as it professed to be in its fealty to Lord Derby, was such as only a man of imperturbable temper and great forethought could have endured. He was their spokesman and chief adviser on almost all occasions; he made no open pretence to guide their policy. He never sought, far less intrigued for, the leadership of the party. The party learned ere long that it could not do without him, and events took their natural course. The leadership, after a few abortive gyrations, fell, so to speak, of its own accord, into his hands, and in spite of more than one ill-arranged and worse-executed attempt to transfer it to another, it has continued with him up to the present hour." From Hansard it does not appear that Mr. Disraeli was regarded by the Whigs as the real leader of the Protectionists until the July of 1849. In the debates that then ensued he is called for the first time the leader. Mr. Roebuck congratulates him "upon this his first appearance as the acknowledged chief of the party." The chancellor of the exchequer speaks of the hon. gentleman as "the avowed leader of a powerful party;" whilst Lord John Russell refers to the Protectionists as "the supporters" of Mr. Disraeli.

* I am quite aware that in the interval between the resignation of Lord George Bentinck and the year 1849, Mr. Disraeli was not the recognized leader in the House of Commons. There were several Richards in the field. Mr. Disraeli's own words, in the memoir of Lord George Bentinck, are, "The session, however, was to commence without a leader, without any recognized organ of communication between parties, or any responsible representative of opinion in debate. All again was chaos. There is, however, something so vital in the conservative party that it seems always to rally under every disadvantage." Still the various rivals for the post of leader of the Protectionists were, in comparison with Mr. Disraeli, only dummies. The government treated Mr. Disraeli as if he were the virtual leader, and between Lord Derby and the member for

burne and Lord Bolingbroke. And thus the right honourable gentleman, when he proposed his commercial change in 1842, announced at the same time that he was bringing all the influence of his justly powerful name, and of his singularly powerful government, to bear on foreign courts, in order to obtain a reciprocal commercial intercourse between this and other countries. Sir, I gave to the right honourable gentleman, at that time, a humble but a sincere and hearty support. I never shall regret it. But it is very necessary that we should recollect, that a great deal had happened in the interval between 1842 and 1845. During that period a great commercial confederation had arisen, very completely organized, and conducted by very able men. They made great way in the country, and they promulgated opinions on commerce very different from those propounded by the late minister in 1842. They were not the opinions of Mr. Pitt, of Lord Shelburne, or of Lord Bolingbroke; they were not the opinions of free-trade, which I am prepared to support. Yes; I am a free-trader, but not a freebooter: honourable gentlemen opposite are freebooters." His opposition was so far effectual that Lord John wisely contented himself with renewing the tax on the same scale at which he had received it from Sir Robert Peel.

The next occasion during this session when the member for Bucks took part in an important debate, was on the motion of Mr. Hume, June 20, 1848. The motion ran thus:—"That this House, as at present constituted, does not fairly represent the population, the property, or the industry of the country, whence has arisen a great and increasing discontent in the minds of a large portion of the people; and it is therefore expedient, with a view to amend the national representation, that the elective franchise shall be so extended as to include all householders; that votes shall be taken by ballot; that the duration of parliament shall not exceed three years; and that the

apportionment of members to population shall be made equal." Mr. Henry Drummond and Lord John Russell had spoken against the motion—Mr. Fox, the member for Oldham, in its favour—when Mr. Disraeli rose. His speech is the first of a series on the question of national representation, and foreshadows the principles he advocated when he introduced his celebrated measure in 1867. Throughout on the question of parliamentary reform, Mr. Disraeli was consistent—the consistency of a far-seeing man who has deeply studied the subject, and knows the line that should be taken. He never regarded the Reform Bill of 1832 as a final measure; and in the various speeches we shall hear him make on the subject between the years 1848 and 1867, we find him ever asserting that the clauses in the bill of 1832 are incomplete, and that it is inevitable that they must be brought again before the House for further and more extended revision. Not once does he ever let fall an expression which can be construed into hostility to electoral change. Give heed to him, for instance, on this occasion, and mark how unreservedly he expresses himself in the matter.

"It is not for us, sir," he said, rising to oppose the motion of Mr. Hume, and to refute its false arguments, "either to defend or attack the Reform Act. We obey it. When it was first brought forward, it encountered the criticism of those who were opposed to His Majesty's ministers in 1832. Perhaps it benefited in some degree by that opposition. But when it had passed—when it became the law of the country—it received from us that allegiance which the law in this country always commands; and no doubt the remedial and practical sense of this country has prevented some of those evils which were then anticipated. . . . *I do not say that it is not necessary to have reform. I will enter fairly into that question, but do not let us enter upon this great question under false pretences. . . . I am not now denying that a change may be necessary:*

that point I am perfectly prepared to enter into. . . . I ventured to say before, that gentlemen around me are not responsible for the Reform Bill. But the Reform Bill was a reconstruction of the order of the Commons—of our estate of the realm. It was a settlement most unsatisfactory to us—we offered our objections to it, and got pelted for our pains. But no one can pretend that settlement was not carried with the full support and sanction of the people of England; and if the question of its passing had been submitted to universal suffrage, there is not the slightest doubt that at the moment all would have registered their votes for the bill. No other plan was desired or tolerated. It was to be something neither more nor less. What you wanted was not only the bill, but the whole bill, and nothing but the bill—and you got it. You were told at the time that the first critics of the Reform Bill would be the reformers themselves; and no prophecy ever was more strikingly fulfilled. But when there has been a settlement of the great question—concluded, too, under such circumstances—the country agitated for two years—yourselves choosing the hour of action—when you had every possible advantage—when opposition, legitimate, constitutional, and I believe national opposition, was entirely overcome by the energy and artifices of your triumphant faction—when you yourselves laid it down as a great apophthegm that became a household word, that you would have it and nothing else—it is not unreasonable that we, who agreed to it with reluctance, or that the Whig party, the government of the day, who brought it forward after mature consideration, should say before we disturb the settlement then made—‘Let us be sure that we are arriving at a new reconstruction that offers a fair prospect of giving satisfaction to the people and security to the state.’

“I speak, not from egotism, for myself on this subject; for one naturally wishes, on such subjects, not to draw any one into responsibility for one’s expression. *I, for*

one, am no advocate for finality. I conceive there may be circumstances—there may be a period when we shall do that which we have done for five hundred years in this country—reconstruct the estate of the Commons. But I contend that the last reconstruction—and it is rather a recent one, however unsatisfactory to the hon. gentleman and his friends—is likely to be more satisfactory to the nation than the plan brought forward by the hon. gentleman: and I am not prepared to support any new plan, any new change, on a subject so important, unless I believe it to be one that will conduce very greatly to the public interest. Certainly I cannot, in the character of the present plan, discover anything that has a tendency to satisfy the public heart; because you must divest this question of all that rhetorical varnish and that powerful sentiment with which it has been suffused by the hon. member for Oldham. This is not at all a project to enfranchise the serfs of England—this is not at all a project that tells the labouring classes they shall take their place in the political constitution of the country. It is characterized by features totally opposed to the principles laid down by the hon. member for Oldham. *If there be any mistake more striking than another in the settlement of 1832—and, in this respect, I differ from the hon. member for Surrey (Mr. Locke King)—it is, in my opinion, that the bill of 1832 took the qualification of property in too hard and rigid a sense, as the only qualification which should exist in this country for the exercise of political rights.* How does the hon. member for Montrose (Mr. Hume), the great champion of the new movement, meet this difficulty? He has brought forward a project of which property, and property alone, is the basis: he has not come forward with any scheme for an educational suffrage or an industrial suffrage—he has not attempted in any way to increase or vary the elements of suffrage. It is impossible that any plan can be more hard, more commonplace, more literal, more unsatisfactory, or more offensive, as the

speech of the hon. member for Oldham shows it must be, to the great body of the working classes, than one which recognizes property, and property alone, as its basis.

"Now, sir, for one, I think property is sufficiently represented in this House. *I am prepared to support the system of 1832 until I see that the circumstances and necessities of the country require a change; but I am convinced that when that change comes, it will be one that will have more regard for other sentiments, qualities, and conditions, than the mere possession of property as a qualification for the exercise of the political franchise.* And, therefore, in opposing the measure of the hon. member for Montrose, *I protest against being placed in the category of finality, or as one who believes that no change is ever to take place* in that wherein there has been, throughout the history of this ancient country, frequent and continuous change—the construction of this estate of the realm. I oppose this new scheme, because it does not appear to be adapted in any way to satisfy the wants of the age, or to be conceived in the spirit of the times."

The speaker then laid bare the sophistries which ran through the arguments of Mr. Fox, and proved how inadequate were the means proposed by Mr. Hume to amend the national representation. He stated that the principal plea for parliamentary reconstruction and political revolution had always been the increase in the expenditure and in the taxation of the country; but now he showed that a little prior to the passing of the Reform Bill, in the year 1828, the revenue raised in the country from ordinary sources was £49,500,000, whilst the revenue raised in 1848 was £47,500,000. Again it was calculated that in 1828 the people of England were taxed something like two guineas a head, whilst in 1848 they were taxed a little over 30s. How, then, could the Radical party maintain their argument that taxation in this country had oppressively increased, and therefore that such a state of things necessitated a change in our parliamentary constitution? He denied the

premise of Mr. Hume that every Englishman had a right to vote. If every Englishman had a right to vote, why was it necessary that he should have a qualification for that vote—why that qualification should be the circumstance of living in a house? The suffrage was neither a trust nor a right, but, as he had always contended, a privilege. And that brought him to his favourite subject, the real character of the House of Commons, and the political order of which its members were the representatives. "We represent the Commons," he said; "the Commons are an estate of the realm. The materials of that estate constitute, of course, a question of policy—of expediency—and it is perfectly open to anybody, at any time, to discuss the question of what that order should consist. It is an order, whether you make it consist of thousands, of hundreds of thousands, or even of two or three millions—it becomes an order and a privileged order; and for the hon. gentleman to pretend that he is settling a great question for ever, by proposing that every man who lives in a house should have a vote is an absurdity, because the very supporter of the motion, on his own side, who has made an eloquent speech in favour of it, has argued throughout that there should be no limitation whatever assigned to the exercise of the suffrage."

With regard to the ballot, he was neither opposed to it nor in favour of it. He simply now saw no necessity for it. It was all folly and nonsense to say that the present age and the present parliament were distinguished by their corrupt practices. The very reverse was the case. All parliaments for the last fifty years had been less and less corrupt. The fact was that parliament was becoming purer and more pure every day—a state of things inevitable in a land of progress like England, where, with a free press and healthy action of public opinion, the undue influence of gold and property must every year, and in each successive parliament, be diminished. The

question of triennial parliaments, he continued, was one upon which he was the less inclined to say anything, since it formed part of those old Tory principles which he had always taken every opportunity of promulgating. Triennial parliaments were a portion of that old Tory creed around which, he was happy to observe more than one indication, the people of this country were well inclined to rally. The only objection to the change was that it *was* a change, and in the present position of affairs all unnecessary changes of this kind were to be deprecated. In conclusion, he opposed all the articles in the motion. They were the result of a mischievous agitation, and of mischievous agitators. They were advocated for the unblushing purpose of securing a middle-class government, instead of an English and a national government. If political changes were necessary, let them be introduced by the proper leaders of the people—the gentlemen of England. The Manchester school were always attacking traditional influences, and intimating that it was their wish to subdivide large properties. Foreseeing, as he did, what the results would be, and convinced that, without traditional influences and large properties, they would find it impossible to govern England, he preferred the liberty they now enjoyed to the liberalism promised by Mr. Hume, and found in the rights of Englishmen something better than the rights of men.

Foreign affairs were now to attract his attention. The year 1848 was a terrible one to all foreign secretaries. Scarcely a state in Europe escaped the dire contagion of revolution. In France Louis Philippe had been forced to fly the country, and a republic had taken the place of a monarchy; Austria was in revolt, and Prince Metternich had been compelled to take shelter in voluntary exile; Berlin was in the hands of the revolutionists; the Italians were up in arms against the hated Austrians; Schleswig and Holstein were at daggers drawn; riots had broken out in Naples owing to the

despotic rule of the weak yet cruel Bomba; Rome was in similar difficulties, and his Holiness had to quit the city in disguise; the Magyars were doing their best to rend the Austrian empire in twain; in the Iberian peninsula Portugal was a prey to internal dissension, whilst Narvaez had dethroned constitutional government in Spain, and in its stead had established a "monstrous despotism;" even quiet humdrum Bavaria did not escape, and the Lola Montes affair caused its amorous king to bow to the verdict of an indignant people, and abdicate his throne.

Lord Palmerston was a vigilant and patriotic foreign minister; but his indiscreet admiration of English institutions caused us then no little trouble and humiliation. "He looks upon the English constitution," said Mr. Disraeli, "as a model farm, and forces it upon every country." When the movement of Narvaez became known to the government, Lord Palmerston thought it his duty, since England had endeavoured to maintain a constitutional monarchy within the Spanish dominions, to act the part of counsellor and friend to the administration at Madrid. He accordingly instructed Sir Henry Bulwer, our minister, to recommend to the Spanish government a line of conduct more in accordance with constitutional usages. "The recent fall of the king of the French," wrote Lord Palmerston, "and of his whole family, and the expulsion of his ministers, ought to teach the Spanish court and government how great is the danger of an attempt to govern a country in a manner at variance with the feelings and opinions of the nation; and the catastrophe which has happened in France must serve to show that even a large and well-disciplined army becomes an ineffectual defence of the crown, when the course pursued by the crown is at variance with the general sentiments of the country." Sir Henry was therefore instructed to suggest to the Spanish government that its basis should be enlarged, by calling to its councils "some of those men

who possess the confidence of the liberal party ;" and then came the threat that unless Spain followed our counsels, our countenance would be withdrawn from her. Narvaez was not the meekest and most amiable of men, and against this interference with the internal affairs of his country he vigorously protested. He had abolished constitutionalism, and it was a matter of utter indifference to him whether he possessed "the confidence of the Liberal party" or the contrary. Accordingly the English ambassador was insulted. He was accused of having furthered the insurrection, of having employed English ships to run round the Spanish coast in order to excite revolt, and of having corrupted the Spanish troops by presents of English gold. He was dismissed the capital under the frivolous pretext that his life was in danger. Such behaviour was of course a direct insult to England ; and in justice to Lord Palmerston, let us remember that he at once proposed prompt and decided measures to the cabinet : the fleet, he said, should be sent immediately to Cadiz to demand satisfaction.

"We had but to send a fleet to Cadiz," writes Sir Henry Bulwer, "and hold up our little finger, and Narvaez and his second would have fallen down like a pack of cards. The queen-mother, who trembled for a large portion of her property engaged in speculations in Cuba, would have been the first to desert him ; the army, not a regiment of which he could rely upon, would have shouted *vivas* to his successor. There is no satisfaction we could have demanded that would not have been gratefully given and prodigally offered." Unfortunately the counsels of our foreign secretary did not prevail. His colleagues declined to support him, and refused to have recourse to extreme measures. Some were delighted at the policy of Lord Palmerston receiving a snub ; others belonged to that school which looks upon national honour as a shadow always to be sacrificed to the substance of immediate interest ; whilst a few, frightened at the wild doctrines

then beginning to threaten society in France, thought that a military despotism was a form of government to be encouraged, and that Narvaez was the right man in the right place. The insult was therefore thought to be sufficiently avenged by the dismissal of the Spanish minister at the court of St. James's, and the rupture of diplomatic relations between the two countries. "Never," writes Sir Henry Bulwer, "was extreme caution the parent of more desperate consequences. But for these consequences Lord Palmerston was not responsible. Had his advice been followed, it is more than probable that Queen Isabella would still have been on the throne in Madrid ; that a constitutional government would have been long since established firmly in France ; and that the campaign of the Crimea would have been avoided."

It was not to be expected that such a humiliation would be ignored by the House of Commons. A resolution was accordingly moved by Mr. Banks (June 5, 1848), "That this House learns with deep regret, from a correspondence between the British government and the government of Spain, that a proposed interference with the internal concerns of the Spanish government, as conducted under the authority and with the entire approval of Her Majesty's ministers, has placed the British government and our representative at the court of Madrid in a position humiliating in its character, and calculated to affect the friendly relations heretofore existing between the courts of Great Britain and Spain." A warm debate ensued, in which Mr. Disraeli took a prominent part. It has been the wise rule of our foreign office never to meddle in continental complications by any active measures, unless English interests are likely to be endangered by the absence of such interference. The vigilance and patriotism of Lord Palmerston were above suspicion ; but during the earlier part of his career, when he held the seals as foreign secretary, he was too apt to use the influence of his office in settling questions which might be

of vital importance to other countries, but which had no direct bearing upon the power or position of England. Mr. Disraeli took a different view of our foreign policy. He held, and as Lord Beaconsfield he practised what he taught, that England was a country not only to be respected, but to be feared; that when she had pledged her word, either by treaty or convention, to carry out what she had promised, no selfish interests should stay her proceedings, and that with the advantages of her position, the strength of her fleet, and the bravery of her men, she was a power, if rightly directed, that none dare despise. He also maintained that though by our geographical position we were happily severed from many of the dangers that menace continental nations, yet our welfare as a great colonial power was so intimately connected with European politics, that in seasons of crisis we could only retire from interference at the expense not only of our prestige but of our safety. Still such views were utterly opposed to bluster, and a feverish national egotism which obtruded itself at every occasion upon our neighbour's affairs, giving him gratuitous advice, seeking to guide and control his actions, and, in short, behaving more like the meddlesome spy than the trusty ally. Mr. Disraeli, therefore, condemned the policy of Lord Palmerston, since it not only needlessly interfered with the internal affairs of other countries, but endeavoured to graft English Liberalism upon foreign constitutions. He objected to the course our foreign secretary had pursued in taking the part of the Magyars against Austria, of the Italians against Austria, and of the Sicilians against the king of Naples. These were matters very important to Austria, to Hungary, to Lombardy, to Naples, but they did not concern us; the intrigues of these struggling nationalities failed in any way to touch our interests, and it was an excellent rule both in public and private life to mind one's own business.

Nay, he contended if any result arose from this interference it would be rather

to our detriment, for it was to our advantage that the north of Italy should belong to Austria, and that Sicily should belong to Naples. Then he alluded to the Madrid affair. He spoke highly of the character of Sir Henry Bulwer; he believed that no man had of late years been employed to serve Her Majesty abroad who had done better service to the crown; and he regretted that after such an insult passed upon so eminent a public servant, the government at home should have offered him no substantial reward for his services. With regard to the unhappy state paper, the cause of all this imbroglio, that Lord Palmerston had addressed to the Spanish government, Mr. Disraeli, in his most sarcastic manner, congratulated his lordship upon the tact with which he reminded Spain of her obligations to England, upon the pure Castilian style of his literary composition, upon his sesquipedalian sentences and his grandiose phraseology. He also complimented the Whigs upon their proselytizing spirit in attempting to convert all nations to English Liberalism. They could not find a country governed by an absolute power without telling her that the only way to be happy and prosperous was to have "a House of Lords and a House of Commons, and an English treaty of commerce." By lending the aid of a great country like England to some miserable faction, they had created parties in domestic policy in every country—from Athens to Madrid—they had deteriorated the prosperity and condition of the people, and had laid the seeds of infinite confusion. He then concluded by impressing upon the House that it was their duty to accept the expulsion of Sir Henry Bulwer as a condemnation of the principles of Liberalism in foreign politics, and that they should not allow so distinguished a man to become the scapegoat of a mischievous policy.

This speech was, however, a mere affair of outposts. Mr. Disraeli reserved himself to the end of the session to give battle in downright earnest. On the motion for going into Committee of Supply (August 30,

1848), he reviewed the policy of the government in a speech which was the wittiest and most brilliant that he had delivered since his famous attacks upon Sir Robert Peel. Not a single blunder escaped his critical inspection. He began by denying that there were any grounds for the complaint raised by the cabinet, that the work of the government had been hindered by the flow of unnecessary talk in the House of Commons. It had been alleged that the reason for postponing the annual fish dinner at Greenwich for a week had been occasioned by the "vexatious discussions in the House of Commons"—by that "mania for talk," which had now reached such a pitch "that something must really be done to arrest the evil." He denied these assertions; the only reason why, after sitting ten months, the House had so little to show for its labours, was due, not to the chatter of members—not to the abuse of parliamentary forms—but to the neglect and incapacity of those who sat on the treasury bench. Let them, he said, recall the circumstances under which the present parliament met. At that time thrones had fallen, dynasties had been uprooted, great ministers, whose reputation had become almost part of history, had toppled down, and they at home were suffering from a commercial crisis of almost unprecedented severity. There were uprootings of commercial dynasties in England not less striking than the fall of those political houses of which they had heard so much. When parliament met there was commercial distress of unprecedented severity; private credit was paralyzed; trade was more than dull, it was almost dead; and there scarcely was a private individual in the kingdom who was not smarting under the circumstances of that commercial distress. The Houses had been assembled specially to take into consideration the commercial difficulties of the nation. Yet what had been done in the matter? Absolutely nothing. Certainly they could not be accused of being influ-

enced by "this mania of talk," for there had been no discussion whatever upon the subject of trade depression.

It was true that there had been a desultory debate on the motion of the Address with respect to commercial distress. It was also true that the cabinet had counselled the Bank of England to infringe the law, and that the directors of that body had not availed themselves of this illegal permission. The conduct of the cabinet in this matter was so weak and whimsical that it was difficult to account for it, except by supposing that they were in a state of very great perplexity. Why they should have been so long before they advised the bank to infringe the law—why, when they had done so, they should have been delighted that the bank did not avail itself of the privilege—and why, having done all this, which amounted to nothing, they should have written the following paragraph in the queen's speech, most certainly puzzled him:—"The embarrassments of trade were at one period aggravated by so general a feeling of distrust and alarm, that Her Majesty, for the purpose of restoring confidence, authorized her ministers to recommend to the directors of the Bank of England a course of proceeding suited to such an emergency. This course might have led to an infringement of the law." Why was that paragraph given to the world? If the recommendation of the ministers had been acted upon, he could have understood its insertion in the speech; but the recommendation had not been acted upon, and therefore matters were precisely as they were before: there had been much fuss, and nothing had come of it.

"I scarcely know," said Mr. Disraeli, amid the laughter of the House, "to what to compare the conduct of Her Majesty's ministers, except something that occurs in a delightful city in the south, with which some of the gentlemen of this House are familiar—and which is now, I believe, blockaded or bullied by the

English fleet. There an annual ceremony takes place, when the whole population are found in a state of the greatest alarm and sorrow. A procession moves through the streets, in which the blood of a saint is carried in a consecrated vase. The people throng round the vase, and there is great pressure—as there was in London at the time to which I am alluding. This pressure in time becomes a panic—just as it did in London. It is curious that in both cases the cause is the same: it is a cause of congealed circulation. Just at the moment when unutterable gloom overspreads the population—when nothing but despair and consternation prevail—the chancellor of the exchequer—I beg pardon—the archbishop of Tarento announces the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood—as the chancellor of the exchequer announced the issue of a government letter: in both instances a wholesome state of currency returned: the people resume their gaiety and cheerfulness, the panic and the pressure disappear, everybody returns to music and macaroni, as in London everybody returned to business; and in both cases the remedy is equally efficient and equally a hoax."

Nor had the conduct of the government, continued Mr. Disraeli, been a whit more satisfactory in their treatment of financial questions. Yet it had certainly not been for the lack of introducing financial measures. They had some time ago the government of "all the talents," but this was the government of "all the budgets." Between February and August, no less than *four* budgets had been submitted to the consideration of the House! The first budget was brought forward in the grandest manner; it was intrusted, not to the chancellor of the exchequer, but to the prime minister himself (for such a measure demanded the expansive views and the high spirit of a statesman), and it proposed to double the income tax. Now, that was a scheme that was not taken up in an hour, or drawn with a pen upon the back of a

letter; that was clearly a financial measure which must have been most completely matured. We know how it was received. A menagerie before feeding time could alone give an idea of the unearthly yell with which the middle classes met this demand. Protests were sent up, indignation meetings were held, and there was a general impression that the income tax was about to be doubled because we were going to war! However, it was thought prudent not to double the income tax; and a second budget was introduced, and again a third, and, indeed, a fourth, all equally inefficient, and all needlessly taking up the time of the House, to the exclusion of useful legislation—of the useful legislation, which, it was stated, had not been practicable owing to the "mania for talk" of certain members. Yet fond hopes had been entertained of that last budget.

"Alas for this fourth budget!" sighed Mr. Disraeli. "It came late, and at a moment when we wanted glad tidings; but, unfortunately, it was not characterized by the sunny aspect which was desirable. I shall never forget the scene. It was a dreary moment. There was a thin House—the thinnest, I suppose, that ever attended a ceremony so interesting to every country, and especially to a commercial and financial country like England. I never saw a budget brought forward before an audience so gloomy and so small. No; I shall never forget the scene. It irresistibly reminded me of a celebrated character who, like the chancellor of the exchequer, had four trials in his time, and whose last was the most unsuccessful—I mean the great hero of Cervantes when he returned from his fourth and final expedition. The great spirit of Quixote had subsided; all that sally of financial chivalry which cut us down at the beginning of the session, and which trampled and cantered over us in the middle, was gone. Hon. gentlemen will remember the chapter to which I refer, which describes the period when the knight's illusions on the subject of chivalry were fast dispelling, and, losing

his faith in chivalry or finance, he returned home crestfallen and weary. The villagers, like the Opposition, were drawn out to receive him; and Cervantes tells us that, though they were aware of his weakness, they treated him with respect. His immediate friends—the barber, the curate, the bachelor Sampson Carasco, whose places might be filled in this house by the first lord of the treasury, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, and perhaps the president of the board of trade—were assembled, and with demure reverence and feigned sympathy they greeted him, broken in spirit and about for ever to renounce those delightful illusions under which he had sallied forth so triumphantly; but just at that moment when everything, though melancholy, was becoming—though sad, was in the best taste—Sancho's wife rushes forward and exclaims, ‘Never mind your kicks and cuffs so you've brought home some money.’ But this is just the thing that the chancellor of the exchequer has not brought. Such was the end of the fourth and final expedition, and such is the result of the fourth and final budget. The chancellor of the exchequer, during the whole session, has been bringing home barbers' basins instead of knightly helms; and at the last moment, true to his nature, to his vocation, and to his career, he finds instead of a surplus a deficiency, and instead of reducing taxation he commemorates his second year of finance by a second loan.”

But if the government had been active with their budgets, they had been very remiss with other measures. He had in his hand, continued Mr. Disraeli, a list of forty-seven bills, two-thirds of them government measures, all of them important, and many of them referring to subjects of great interest, yet owing to the incapacity of the cabinet to deal with public business, and to turn to practical account the hours at their disposal, they had been entirely withdrawn, or else postponed to a time which might never arrive. He attributed the unsatisfactory

condition of public business to two causes. The first was that the cabinet when preparing their plans had no conviction, owing to their weak parliamentary position, that their measures would be carried. The second was that ministers did not mature or finish their measures, but threw them upon the House, for it to complete and prepare the means of governing the country. Hence the House of Commons, instead of being a purely legislative body, was every day becoming a more administrative assembly. It was in fact a great committee sitting on public affairs, in which every man spoke with the same right, and almost with the same weight. No more the disciplined array of traditional influences and hereditary opinions—the realized experience of an ancient society and of a race that for generations had lived and flourished in the high practice of a noble system of self-government. Those were all past. Instead, the future was to provide them with a compensatory alternative in the conceits of the illiterate, the crotchetts of the whimsical, the violent courses of a vulgar ambition that acknowledged no gratitude to antiquity, to posterity no duty, until at last that free and famous parliament of England was to subside to the low water-mark of those national assemblies and provisional conventions which were at the same time the terror and the derision of the world.

“Sir,” he concluded, “I trace all this evil to the disorganization of party. I know that there are gentlemen in this House who affect to depreciate party government. I am not now going to enter into a discussion respecting party government; but this I will tell you—as I have told you before, in a manner which has not yet been met by any of the gentlemen who oppose my views on this subject—that you cannot choose between party government and parliamentary government. I say, you can have no parliamentary government if you have no party government; and therefore when gentlemen denounce party

government they strike at that scheme of government which, in my opinion, has made this country great, and which I hope will keep it great. I can foresee, though I dare not contemplate, the consequences of the system that now prevails. . . . I really believe that if you persist in this system it will effect results which no revolution has yet succeeded in accomplishing—which none of those conspirators that you have lately disturbed in their midnight conclaves have had the audacity to devise. I know no institution in the country that can long withstand its sapping and deleterious influence. As for the class of public men that have hitherto so gloriously administered the affairs of this country, I believe they will be swept off the face of our political world. For my part I protest against the system; I denounce it. Even at the eleventh hour I call upon the country to brand it with its indignant reprobation. But whatever may be the consequences—whatever may be the fortunes of individuals or the fate of institutions—I at least have had the satisfaction of calling public attention to this political plague spot—I at least have had the satisfaction of attempting to place in a clear light the cause of this great national evil. I have had more—I have had the consolation of justifying this great assembly, in which it is my highest honour to hold a seat, and of vindicating, in the face of England, the character and conduct of the House of Commons." By both sides of the House this speech was much admired.

Mr. Disraeli during this period frequently returned to the subject of our foreign policy, and seldom discussed the question save in a condemnatory spirit. He did not consider that, by attempting to dictate to other nations, we advanced the cause of constitutional government. The cabinet, in his opinion, were departing from the established policy of England, and in several of the complications favoured by the foreign secretary he considered their successful issue impossible, and even if possible, of a positive disadvantage to the

interests of the country. It must, however, be candidly admitted that though in several of his criticisms Mr. Disraeli had right on his side, he failed to see with the clearness of Lord Palmerston the result of many of the diplomatic intrigues then agitating every embassy in Europe. He called the idea of German nationality dreamy and dangerous nonsense, yet at the present day such "nonsense" is a most decided fact. Lord Palmerston, on the other hand, predicted the future with wonderful foresight. "Nature," he writes to his brother about this date, "has not been bountiful to Prussia, at least to the district round Berlin, as regards soil and perhaps climate; but she has been more liberal as to mental endowments, and one cannot visit the country without being struck with the great intellectual activity which shows itself in all classes. There is scarcely a man in the country who cannot read and write. In short, *Prussia is taking the lead in German civilization; and as Austria has gone to sleep and will be long before she wakes, Prussia has a fine career open to her for many years to come.*" Therefore holding these opinions he favoured the development of German unity, whilst Mr. Disraeli opposed it, considering such an idea impracticable. Again as regards Italy the foreign secretary was right and Mr. Disraeli wrong. Lord Palmerston wished to see the whole of northern Italy united into one kingdom, and declared that the Austrians ought to have no place in Lombardy. "Austria," he wrote to Lord Ponsonby, "has never possessed Italy as part of her empire, but has always held it as a conquered territory. There has been no mixture of races. The only Austrians have been the troops and the civil officers. She has governed it as you govern a garrison town, and her rule has always been hateful." Any Englishman who remembers the condition of North Italy before the Villafranca treaty—the intensity of the social and political hate of the Italians, and especially of the Italian ladies against the despotism of the alien

race—will confirm in even stronger terms the opinion of Lord Palmerston. Mr. Disraeli was hostile to the idea of Italian unity, and supported the occupation of Lombardy by the Austrians. Indeed, with regard to most of the questions relating to our foreign policy during this time upon which he was at variance with Lord Palmerston, the usual prescience of the member for Bucks seems to have deserted him.

One debate upon this subject has a melancholy interest for us. A vote of censure on the foreign policy of the government had been carried in the House of Lords. The prime minister, however, expressed his intention not to resign, and argued that as the leader of the Conservatives had brought forward a vote of censure in the upper house it behoved the Conservative leader in the lower house to follow suit. Mr. Disraeli, aware that he was in a minority, was much too prudent a general to court a pitched battle. Thereupon Mr. Roebuck, who was always glad to cross swords with the Protectionist leader, brought forward a motion approving of the foreign policy of the government, and more particularly as to its latest development in the form of a quarrel with Greece respecting the miserable Don Pacifico affair. The motion conveyed an "oblique censure" on the course which Lord Aberdeen, the foreign minister of Sir Robert Peel, had pursued, and therefore called forth a defence from the late premier. It was not known whether Sir Robert would vote for or against the government, and his words were listened to anxiously by both sides of the House. It was universally admitted that he had never spoken with more effect. He referred in tones of unmistakable regret to old friendships interrupted, but not, as he hoped, beyond the possibility of renewal. It is gratifying to learn that this sentiment was cheered by the Protectionists with such cordiality as to cause Sir Robert considerable emotion. He hid his face in his hat, and remained silent for some moments. Then, proceeding with his speech, he vindi-

cated the action of his own government in the past, and laid down the general lines on which our foreign policy should always be constructed. It was the last time he was to address the House. The next day, whilst riding up Constitution Hill, he was thrown from his horse, and died a few days afterwards from the internal injuries he had sustained. "Peace to his ashes!" writes Mr. Disraeli. "His name will be often appealed to in that scene which he loved so well, and never without homage even by his opponents."

There were, however, few subjects, during this period of Whig ascendancy, which more frequently attracted the attention of Mr. Disraeli than the condition of the agricultural interest. All the evils he had foretold had come to pass; bread was not cheaper, wages had fallen; farmers, unable to compete with foreign imports, declined to renew their leases; and the country gentlemen, with the prospect of their farms being thrown upon their hands, and nothing but a gloomy future before them, began to retrench their expenditure, much to the loss of local trade. "We are to suffer," they said, "the same fate as the West India planters; the emancipation of the slaves has destroyed the sugar interest; the repeal of the corn laws is to usher in the ruin of the landed interest." Mr. Disraeli, as the leader of the country party, warmly supported its cause, and never lost an opportunity of bringing its condition before the House of Commons. What had been done should not be undone, he said; the corn laws had been repealed, and to struggle for their reimposition would be unsound statesmanship. Still it was possible to mitigate the evils that had ensued from the measure by a just method of relief. "My conscience," said he, addressing the agricultural association of Buckinghamshire, "does not accuse me that when the protective system was attacked, I did not do my best to uphold it. But to uphold a system that exists, and to bring back a system that has been abrogated, are two different things; and I am

convinced myself that the system generally known as the 'protective system,' can never be brought back unless it is the interest of all classes—at least of all classes of importance—that that should be the principle which should regulate the national industry, and unless the nation speaks out upon the question in an unmistakable manner. (Let us remember this statement when we have to consider his conduct towards free-trade as chancellor of the exchequer.) But knowing as I do the difficulties in which the question is involved, am I, as the representative of an agricultural constituency, to sit still, and to say that those whose interests I represent are to be allowed to fall into a state of dilapidation because nothing but that one remedy can be acknowledged as the one that is satisfactory, when we all know that that is one that can be obtained only under most difficult circumstances? No; I look to the general question. What is the reason that the British agriculturist cannot compete with the foreign producer? The reason is, that he is subjected to a load of taxation which overwhelms his energies, and which curtails his enterprise."

This load of taxation Mr. Disraeli used all his eloquence in his place in parliament to have, if not entirely, at least partly removed. The new commercial system, he was never wearied of informing his hearers, had had a trial, a fair trial, and had failed; the only result he saw of free trade was to bring about commercial collapse. It had been of service to other countries, who had benefited by our folly, to the ruin of some of the best of our markets, whilst England, in her turn, had gained no corresponding advantage. "Reciprocity," he said, "is, indeed, a great principle—it is at once cosmopolitan and national. But the system you are pursuing is one quite contrary; you go on fighting hostile tariffs with free imports, and the consequence is, that you are following a course most injurious to the commerce of the country." He then exposed the injustice of the heavy

taxation that the land had to suffer. The whole of the local taxation of the country for national purposes fell mainly, if not exclusively, on real property, and visited with undue severity the occupiers of land. In fact, more than one-third of the revenue then derived from the excise was levied upon those agricultural products which, by the recent change in the law, had been exposed to direct competition with the untaxed commodities of foreign countries—the home producer thus being subjected to a burden of taxation which, by greatly enhancing the price, limited the demand for British produce, and to restrictions which injuriously interfered with the conduct of his trade and industry. These grievances, Mr. Disraeli earnestly contended, should be redressed, and a more equitable apportionment of the public burdens established. The agricultural classes had been promised relief, first by Sir Robert Peel, and then by Lord John Russell, from the heavy imposts to which they were subjected; but as yet nothing had been done. Was it wise to create this feeling of discontent and then to ignore it?

"You think," he warned, "you may trust the proverbial loyalty of the agricultural classes. Trust their loyalty, but do not abuse it. I daresay it may be said of them as it was said 3000 years ago in the most precious legacy of political science that has descended to us—I daresay it may be said of them that the agricultural class is the least given to sedition. I doubt not that is as true of the Englishman of the plain and of the dale as it was of the Greek of the isle and of the continent; but it would be just as well if you also recollect that the fathers of these men were the founders of your liberties, and that before this time their ancestors have bled for justice. Rely upon it that the blood of those men who refused to pay ship-money is not to be trifled with. Their conduct to you has exhibited no hostile feeling, notwithstanding the political changes that have abounded of late years, and all apparently to a diminution

of their power. They have inscribed a homely sentence on their rural banners, but it is one which, if I mistake not, is already again touching the heart and convincing the reason of England—‘Live and let live.’ You have adopted a different motto—you, the leading spirits on the benches which I see before me, have openly declared your opinion that if there were not an acre of land cultivated in England it would not be the worse for the country. You have all of you in open chorus announced your object to be the monopoly of the commerce of the universe, and to make this country the workshop of the world. Your system and theirs are exactly contrary. They invite union. They believe that national prosperity can only be produced by the prosperity of all classes. You prefer to remain in isolated splendour and solitary magnificence. But, believe me, I speak not as your enemy when I say, that it will be an exception to the principles which seem hitherto to have ruled society, if you can succeed in maintaining the success at which you aim without the possession of that permanence and stability which the territorial principle alone can afford. Although you may for a moment flourish after their destruction—although your ports may be filled with shipping, your factories smoke on every plain, and your forges flame in every city—I see no reason why you should form an exception to that which the page of history has mournfully recorded; that you, too, should not fade like the Tyrian dye, and moulder like the Venetian palaces. But, united with the land, you will obtain the best and surest foundation upon which to build your enduring welfare; you will find in that interest a counsellor in all your troubles—in danger your undaunted champion, and in adversity your steady customer.”

His counsel was, however, not heeded; yet Mr. Disraeli, though ridiculed by the free-traders and defeated on the several motions he proposed to the House of Commons for the relief of the agricultural

interest, was not to be deterred from his object. To the dismay of the Whigs, and to the special annoyance of Mr. Cobden, he kept up a running fire of pertinent questions which were more easy to ask than to answer. He wanted to know, if the repeal of the corn laws had been so universally beneficial, why the poor rates had been raised seventeen per cent, why the manufacturing population who were said to be in the receipt of such high wages were flocking to the workhouses, why wages for piece work in the cotton trade had fallen, why the revenue which had formerly yielded a surplus was now marked by heavy deficiency, why there was such an increase—an increase in three years of seventy-four per cent.—in the number of able-bodied paupers in England, why in the three years 1845–48 statistics showed a diminution in our exports of £7,000,000, and other similar awkward inquiries. Then he again advocated the principle of reciprocity, and proposed to meet hostile tariffs of foreign countries with countervailing duties. He was opposed by Sir Robert Peel in his most unpleasant manner, for it is an error to suppose that after the repeal of the corn laws all sparring between the ex-premier and the member for Bucks was at an end. Frequent venomous passages of arms ensued between the two, as the reader of Hansard can see for himself.

On this occasion Mr. Disraeli thus retorted:—“I must say,” he replied, referring to Sir Robert Peel’s condemnation of the theory of reciprocity, “with all respect to the right hon. baronet, that there is something in his manner when he addresses on these subjects his former companions, which I will not say is annoying, but rather I would style somewhat astonishing. One would almost imagine from the tone of the right hon. gentleman that he had never for a moment held other opinions on this subject—that he had never entertained a doubt about it—that he had been born an infant Hercules, cradled in political economy, and

only created to strangle the twin serpents of protection and monopoly. . . . The right hon. gentleman should view one's errors at least with charity. He is not exactly the individual who, *ex cathedra*, should lecture us on the principles of political economy. He might, at least, when he denounces our opinions, suppose that in their profession we may perhaps be supported by that strength of conviction which, for nearly forty years, sustained him in those economical errors of which he was the learned and powerful professor. . . . He preaches a crusade against the system of commercial reciprocity. . . . Men of great scientific research have investigated and illustrated it; and I believe that it will require more time and discussion than it has yet received in this house, before it can be thrown into that limbo of stale opinions in which the right hon. gentleman has found it convenient to deposit so many of his former convictions."

In spite of the Free-traders having a majority in the House, the Protectionists possessed a large following in the country. Meetings were held in almost every shire, advocating reciprocity and protesting against the English producer being handicapped for the benefit of his foreign competitor. All that was wanted, cried impoverished tradesmen, was justice; but this the government refused to grant them. No notice was taken of their complaints; local taxation was not re-adjusted, and the imposts which specially pressed upon the agricultural interest still continued to paralyze industry. In a powerful speech, Mr. Disraeli warned the government of the dangers it incurred by exchanging the aristocratic principle, which was the sound foundation of England's fortunes, for that of middle-class tinkering and a false system of economy. "You set to work," he said, "to change the basis upon which English society was established—you disdain to attempt the accomplish-

ment of the best, and what you want to achieve is the cheapest. But I have shown you that, considered only as an economical principle, the principle is fallacious—that its infallible consequence is to cause the impoverishment and embarrassment of the people, as proved by the dark records to which I have had occasion so much to refer. But the impoverishment of the people is not the only ill consequence which the new system may produce. The wealth of England is not merely material wealth—it does not merely consist in the number of acres we have tilled and cultivated, nor in our havens filled with shipping, nor in our unrivalled factories, nor in the intrepid industry of our miners. Not these merely form the principal wealth of our country—we have a more precious treasure, and that is the character of the people. That is what you have injured. In destroying what you call class legislation, you have destroyed that noble and indefatigable ambition which has been the best source of all our greatness, of all our prosperity, and of all our power. I know of nothing more remarkable in the present day than the general discontent which prevails, accompanied as it is on all sides by an avowed inability to suggest any remedy. The feature of the present day is depression and perplexity. As far as I can judge, men in every place—in the golden saloon and in the busy mart of industry, in the port and in the exchange, by the loom or by the plough, every man says, 'I suffer, and I see no hope.' " He ended with a declaration of war against the ministry. It was on this occasion that Mr. Bernal Osborne described the motion of Mr. Disraeli as "a flash in the pan motion." Mr. Disraeli stood up at once and cried, "I say it is an earnest and serious motion; its object is to turn out the government. We may not succeed, but we shall succeed some day." They had not long to wait.

CHAPTER VI.

WHIG DECLINE.

WHILE the country was a prey to this state of gloom and discontent, an affair occurred which created no little excitement at the time. Our national pulse has occasionally been made to beat quicker at the rumours, circulated by the credulous and the suspicious, as to the prospect of foreign conquest. Now it has been Spain that threatened us, then Holland, then France, and there are some among us at the present day who deplore the unprotected condition of our east coast, and talk mysteriously of a German invasion. But it was reserved for the government of Lord John Russell to terrify us with the prospect and possibility of a spiritual conquest. Ever since the revival of ceremonialism or ritualism, which was one of the consequences of the Tractarian agitation, Rome has been busy in our midst with all her proselytizing machinery, and has had no reason to regret the success that has attended upon her efforts. Ritualism has been to her an active and ever useful decoy. The idle, the fashionable, and the frivolous, who wish a new excitement, find in the routine of ceremonialism a constant occupation. The lounger, who is fond of music, flowers, processions, and a theatrical ritual, forsakes his, perhaps, dull parish church for the bright little temple of the ceremonialist, and thinks, as he sings, and kneels, and gesticulates, that he is engaged in public worship. The fashionable woman of the world, who, wearied or disappointed with society, moaned over the time that hung so heavily upon her hands, now finds in the resources of ceremonialism a constant occupation — early celebrations, frequent church services, the embroidery of altar cloths, the arrangement of church

decorations, the quiet festivities, the subdued flirtations, all make the once leaden day pass swiftly and pleasantly. That large floating population, who dislike religious worship, but who do not feel comfortable unless its forms are occasionally gone through, gladly avail themselves of the fascinations placed within their reach by the ceremonialist, and render thanks that at last the pill of public devotion has so charmingly gilded.

It is impossible to deny that ceremonialism is daily gaining converts among the higher, or to speak more correctly, among the wealthier classes. We are living under a plutocracy, and ritualism is essentially the religion for the rich. In ritualism plutocracy sees itself reflected: it is the caricature of an ancient faith, as the plutocrat is himself the caricature of the aristocrat of former days; it is gay, and gaudy, and fond of pomp and show, like the plutocrat; it is arrogant and self-asserting, its priests concealing their want of birth and scholarship by the robes of sacerdotal pretensions, as the plutocrat himself attempts to hide his deficiencies by the display of his wealth and money power: it is shallow, unscrupulous, and miserably effeminate. Yet no one can deny that it is a force in the country, and one daily extending in power. It is, however, at the present day, an accepted fact; the novelty is worn off; we are high church or low church as it suits our intellectual calibre, or æsthetic fancies, and the circumstance of being either is so much a matter of course as to excite little or no remark. In the year 1850 ceremonialism occupied a very different position, and created very different feelings. It was new, and there was an attractive hue

of mediævalism about it. Its apostles were, not as now, often literates glad to conceal the absence of the university hood by the richly woven cope, but distinguished men ; and every one who attached himself to the new creed professed it with the fervour and intolerance of the typical apostate. Then after reflection, those who adopted these forms and ceremonies soon arrived at the truth, that the logical conclusion of ritualism was Romanism, and their next step was to enrol themselves as adherents of the Papacy. Few will contradict the assertion, that the teaching of the ritualist has caused, and is causing, numbers of Englishmen and Englishwomen to embrace the Roman Catholic faith. Such persons, however, now accept quietly and unostentatiously their new creed, and their desertion from Protestantism, therefore, creates little comment.

In 1850, and the years immediately preceding and succeeding that date, conversions to the Roman Church were not only very numerous, but the men who then swore fealty to the Pope were among the most eminent of England's sons; and hence their abandonment of the faith of their fathers caused considerable commotion. Thus sanguine Rome believed that the England which had repelled her advances since the days of Cardinal Pole, was ripe to receive those views she had rejected at the Reformation. Special missions were, therefore, organized with the one object of the conversion of the inhabitants of our stubborn island. Churches were built, monasteries were founded, nunneries sprang up in secluded spots; and so brilliant were the successes which this Catholic activity obtained, that, to foreign eyes, it appeared as if England was fast losing hold of her Protestantism. The pope, and continental archbishops and bishops, saw the Catholic churches in England crowded, the priests well received, the Irish dignitaries treated with every respect by the government of the day, and ritualism, the precursor of Romanism, the fashionable faith of the country. Yet it was, then as now, only an agitation on the surface—the

great bulk of the nation was untouched by the revival. The educated higher classes, the middle classes, and the lower classes, have always been opposed to the pretensions of the papist or the ceremonialist; the tendency of their religious feeling sets more towards deism or puritanism than to superstition. It is from the minority—from an emotional, a fashionable, a frivolous minority—that ritualism draws her votaries and Rome makes her converts.

The supreme Pontiff was not aware of this fact. A foreigner, holding his court in the distant city of Rome, and arriving at his conclusions only by rumour and hearsay, it was pardonable for him to mistake a broad but shallow tributary for the main stream. He dreamed that all England was in favour of a return to Catholicism when it was but a section of her people; and he issued his famous state paper which was only to show him how far the nation in its entirety was removed from any wish of again being subject to his jurisdiction. He was to find that his yoke was as hateful to England generally as it had ever been. The disappointment of the Vatican at the reception in England of this memorable document was, however, very keen. A totally different feeling had been expected. For the last few years the English Catholics had been appealing to Rome to be placed on the same footing as their brethren across St. George's channel. Instead of the vicars-apostolic who then superintended their spiritual condition, the English Catholics wished as in Ireland to have the country parcelled out into sees, and bishops openly acknowledged once more to rule over the land of à Becket and Pole. A few of the more latitudinarian English Catholics—who were Englishmen first and Papists afterwards—objected to the expression of this desire, since, they said, such an introduction might interfere with their allegiance to the sovereign, but these were in the minority. The mass were in favour of the establishment of a Catholic hierarchy, and for the free exercise of their

religion with all its accustomed pomp and splendour.

Nor was this feeling surprising; it was but the natural development of the liberty accorded by the Catholic Emancipation Act. In every earnest and enlightened mind religion is the predominating influence, and consequently the Papist, relieved of his political disabilities, was not content until his religious disabilities were also removed. He wanted the rank of his clergy to be frankly admitted, a hierarchy to be instituted, and his church to be treated as at least the equal of the established creed of the land. It was this development that Sir Robert Peel had feared, and which had caused him in the earlier days of Catholic agitation to oppose the Emancipation Act. "If you give the Catholics," said he, "that fair proportion of national power to which their numbers, wealth, talents, and education will entitle them, can you believe that they will or can remain contented with the limits which you assign to them? Do you think that they will view with satisfaction the state of your church or their own? Do you think that if they are constituted like other men; if they have organs, senses, affections, passions like ourselves; if they are, as no doubt they are, sincere and zealous professors of that religious faith to which they belong; if they believe your intrusive church to have usurped the temporalities which it possesses—do you think that they will not aspire to the re-establishment of their own church in all its ancient splendour? Is it not natural that they should? If I argue from my own feelings, if I place myself in their situation, I answer that it is. May I not then, without throwing any calumnious imputations upon any Roman Catholics . . . may I not, arguing from the motives by which men are actuated, from the feelings which nature inspires—may I not question the policy of admitting those who must have views hostile to the religious establishments of the state, to the capacity

of legislating for the interests of those establishments and the power of directing the government of which those establishments form so essential a part?"

Therefore believing, as nearly 300 years ago Cardinal Pole had believed when he set out from the monastery by the blue waters of the Lago di Guarda for the shores of England, that our country was no longer prejudiced against the Holy See, but softened, almost repentant, and well-nigh ready to return to its long-forsaken loyalty, Pius IX. issued the bull ordaining "the re-establishment in the kingdom of England and according to the common laws of the church, of a hierarchy of bishops deriving their titles from their own sees." The whole country was mapped out into dioceses and placed under the spiritual jurisdiction of Cardinal Wiseman as archbishop of Westminster, and twelve suffragans instead of the eight apostolic vicariates that had formerly existed. In addition to this invasion of the territory of a Protestant country, his Holiness reserved to himself a power which the Vatican has never dared to exercise in any Catholic kingdom. All bishops appointed to these new sees were to be nominated alone by the Pope, and the government of the day was not even permitted to have a voice in the elections or to exercise the right of veto. This piece of absolutism was at variance with the etiquette usually followed by the court of Rome on similar occasions. In all countries holding the Catholic faith the government either selects the candidate for the episcopate or exercises the right of veto on his appointment.

The case had arisen before. In 1813, on the motion of Mr. Grattan for the immediate consideration in a committee of the whole House of the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, the Papists had refused to grant the Crown a veto on the appointment of Roman Catholic bishops in Ireland. Sir Robert Peel thus expressed himself:—"Let the Catholics recollect," he said, "that they are not only unwilling to pay the same price for political

privileges that is exacted from the other subjects of His Majesty, but that they have hitherto refused to submit to the same restrictions that with their own consent are imposed upon the Catholics of other countries wherein the government is not Catholic ; and this with the Pope's consent. When gentlemen refer us to the state of the Catholics of Canada, and to their admission to offices there and in Russia, let them recollect that the cases are not parallel—that in Canada the Protestant sovereign of this country has the appointment of the Catholic bishop of Quebec; and that when the Empress Catherine founded the Catholic church of Mohilau, the Pope, as a matter of course, granted his sanction to the appointment of a bishop nominated by the empress. Let gentlemen recollect when they charge us with bigotry and with intolerance, that the claims now advanced by the Catholics are claims which unquestionably would have been rejected without hesitation at a time when Catholic princes were on the throne of these realms, and when Catholics composed its legislature." It was therefore more the manner in which this papal bull was issued than the nature of the clauses contained in it which excited the ire of the English people. "The thing itself in truth," writes Lord Palmerston, "is little or nothing, and does not justify the irritation. What has goaded the nation is the manner, insolent and ostentatious, in which it has been done. . . . Nobody would have remarked or objected to the change if it had been made quietly, and only in the bosom of the church. What the Pope and his priests have lately done has materially injured the Catholic cause."

Certainly the excitement created by the measure was extreme, and when calmly considered was not a little ridiculous. Meetings were held all over the country denouncing in the strongest language the papal bull and the new cardinal. All the old Protestant stories as to the relationship existing between priests and nuns were

freely circulated, and pamphlets, especially illustrated pamphlets, which dealt in unsavoury monastic and conventional revelations, had an immense sale. It was at the time when the effigy of Guy Fawkes was generally carried about the streets ; but now, instead of the old conspirator, with his well-known Spanish hat, and lantern, and transpontine boots, there appeared the stuffed figure of Cardinal Wiseman clad in his scarlet robes, which was consigned to the flames amid the cheers of an enthusiastic mob. Addresses poured in upon the queen from all parties and from all institutions, breathing the most fervid loyalty. At the lord mayor's dinner the lord chancellor awoke the wildest applause by introducing in his speech the quotation from Shakspeare—" Under my feet I'll stamp thy cardinal's hat, in spite of pope or dignities of the church." At the theatre Charles Kean was playing King John. When he came to the words in his reply to Pandulph—

"That no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
But as we under Heaven are supreme head,
So, under him, that great supremacy,
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without the assistance of a mortal hand;
So tell the pope; all reverence set apart,
To him, and his usurp'd authority"—

the performance was stopped for several minutes, so frantic were the cheers of the audience. Protestant associations, Father Gavazzi, and "Dr. Cumming of Scotland," made excellent capital out of the national excitement, and caused the "no Popery" cry to swell in volume and fury.

Unfortunately Cardinal Wiseman had done all in his power to irritate the prejudices of the English people by the issue of a very arrogant and offensive pastoral letter. It was dated "out of the Flaminian Gate at Rome," thus reminding Englishmen that from out of Rome itself came the declaration of supremacy over them, and it was addressed to the faithful about to become his spiritual subjects. It calmly ignored the legal rights of the English episcopate,

and took not the slightest notice of the existence of any other church or faith in the kingdom save that of the Catholics. It affected to look upon England as a nation restored by an act of spiritual sovereignty to the body of the Roman church, and regarded the new hierarchy as the only legitimate source of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. "The great work," it declared, "is complete; what you have long desired and prayed for is granted. Your beloved country has received a place among the fair churches which normally constituted form the splendid aggregate of Catholic communion; Catholic England has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament, from which its light had long vanished, and begins now anew its course of regularly adjusted action around the centre of unity, the source of jurisdiction, of light, and of vigour." The prime minister was far too feverish and impulsive a man to allow an occasion like the present to escape his trenchant criticisms. The Whigs were no longer in the ascendant, they were daily becoming more and more unpopular in the country; and Lord John Russell now thought he saw his way to appeal to the passions of the nation, and improve his political position. As in his famous Edinburgh letter he had made a bid for office by appealing to the free traders, so now, in his equally memorable Durham letter, he bade for a further tenure of power by appealing to the Protestantism of the country. The bishop of Durham had written to the prime minister upon the recent papal aggression, and Lord John, without any consultation with his colleagues, at once penned the following answer, which forthwith found its way into the newspapers:—

"DOWNING STREET,
November 4, 1850.

"My Dear Lord,—I agree with you in considering the late aggression of the pope upon our Protestantism as insolent and insidious, and I therefore feel as indignant as you can do upon the subject. I not only promoted to the utmost of my power the claims of Roman Catholics to all civil rights; but I thought it right, and even

desirable, that the ecclesiastical system of the Roman Catholics should be the means of giving instruction to the numerous Irish emigrants in London and elsewhere, who, without such help, would have been left in heathen ignorance. This might have been done, however, without any such innovation as we have now seen.

"It is impossible to confound the recent measures of the pope with the division of Scotland into dioceses by the Episcopal Church, or the arrangement of districts in England by the Wesleyan Conference. There is an assumption of power in all the documents which have come from Rome—a pretension to supremacy over the realm of England, and a claim to sole and undivided sway which is inconsistent with the queen's supremacy, with the rights of our bishops and clergy, and with the spiritual independence of the nation, as asserted even in Roman Catholic times.

"I confess, however, that my alarm is not equal to my indignation. Even if it shall appear that the ministers and servants of the pope in this country have not transgressed the law, I feel persuaded that we are strong enough to repel any outward attacks. The liberty of Protestantism has been enjoyed too long in England to allow of any successful attempt to impose a foreign yoke upon our minds and consciences. No foreign prince or potentate will be permitted to fasten his fetters upon a nation which has so long and so nobly vindicated its right to freedom of opinion, civil, political, and religious.

"Upon this subject, then, I will only say that the present state of the law shall be carefully examined, and the propriety of adopting any proceeding with reference to the recent assumption of power deliberately considered.

"There is a danger, however, which alarms me much more than any aggression of a foreign sovereign. Clergymen of our own church, who have subscribed the Thirty-nine Articles and acknowledged in explicit terms the queen's supremacy, have been the most forward in leading their flock, step by step, to the very verge of the precipice. The honour paid to saints, the claim of infallibility for the church, the superstitious use of the sign of the cross, the muttering of the Liturgy so as to disguise the language in which it is written, the recommendation of auricular confession, and the administration of penance and absolution—all these things are pointed out by clergymen of the Church of England as worthy of adoption, and are now openly reprehended by the bishop of London in his charge to the clergy of his diocese. What then is the danger to be apprehended from a foreign prince of no great power, compared to the danger within the gates from the unworthy sons of the Church of England herself?

"I have little hope that the propounders and framers of these innovations will desist from their insidious course; but I rely with confidence on the people of England, and I will not bate a jot of heart or life so long as the glorious principles and the immortal martyrs of the Reformation shall be held in reverence by the great mass of a nation which looks with contempt on the mummeries of superstition, and with scorn at the laborious endeavours which are now making to confine the intellect and enslave the soul.—I remain, with great respect, &c.,

J. RUSSELL."

This letter was received by the country with various feelings. By some it was looked upon as an exaggeration of matters, and as an unworthy attempt to fan the passions of the hour. The majority of the premier's colleagues, who had not been consulted as to the composition of this famous private state-paper, regarded its issue with disfavour, and as calculated to act detrimentally to the position of the cabinet. But by a large portion of the nation its thoroughly Protestant tone, and especially the strictures passed upon the ritualists, were hailed with delight.

The country party have always been the warm adherents of royalty's great ally, the Church of England. They regard her not only as a grand old historical corporation, but as a communion in which will be found a purer doctrine, a deeper faith, and a more enlightened discipline than in any other religious body. Their social instincts make them dislike dissent, their religious principles make them dislike Popery. To the old-fashioned country gentleman, whose hall or manor-house is within easy reach of the village church where moulder the bones of his ancestors, the Church of England is precisely the communion suited to his tastes, his habits, and his prejudices: her creed is Protestant, her clergy are gentlemen, and her discipline is orderly, without mummary. Holding these views, the country party had in bygone days been among the most earnest of the opponents to the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, whilst the sickly sacerdotal pretensions of the Puseyites

were even more repugnant to their manly English nature. They agreed with Lord Eldon, that the union between the church and the state was not supported to make the church political, but the state religious; and that the English constitution was not based upon the principles of equal rights to all men indiscriminately, but of equal rights to all men conforming to, and complying with, the tests which that constitution required for its ascendancy.

As the leader of the country party, Mr Disraeli was desired to express his opinion upon the recent agitation. In his "Vindication of the English Constitution," he writes, "It is one of the leading principles of the policy of England that the religious discipline and future welfare of our citizens are even of greater importance than their political or present well-being;" and as we proceed in this history we shall see how on subsequent occasions he rallied the Tory party for the defence of the union of church and state. He therefore gladly complied with the request, though he considered that, on the present occasion, the Government was more to be blamed than the Vatican for the scare that had been created. Like the prime minister, he expressed his views through the medium of the post. He addressed a letter to the lord-lieutenant of his county. He considered the Pope was not so much to blame as the present cabinet; if Lord John Russell and his colleagues had not foolishly gone out of their way to show such marked attention to the Roman Catholic prelates of Ireland, by openly giving them the rank they silently claimed, the supreme pontiff would never have been encouraged to put forth his recent pretensions. There had always been Roman Catholic bishops in England who had exercised authority over their respective congregations, and from them had received every homage; yet the state had never taken any more notice of them than it had of the chief rabbi or the president of the body of the Wesleyans. On the other hand, the present govern-

ment had granted to the Irish prelates their titles of honour, had placed them in the table of precedence, and had treated them as if they were on a footing with our own hierarchy. "After the recognition given by the government to the Irish hierarchy," writes Mr. Disraeli to the lord-lieutenant, and commenting upon the contents of the Durham letter, "His Holiness might well deem himself at liberty to apportion England into dioceses, to be ruled over by bishops. Instead of supposing that he was taking a step 'insolent and insidious,' he might conceive he was acting in strict accordance with Her Majesty's government. The fact is, the whole question has been surrendered and decided in favour of the Pope by the present government. The ministers who recognized the pseudo-archbishop of Tuam as a peer and a prelate, cannot object to the appointment of a pseudo-archbishop of Westminster, even though he be a cardinal. On the contrary, the loftier dignity should, according to their table of precedence, rather invest his Eminence with a still higher patent of nobility, and permit him to take the wall of his Grace of Canterbury, and the highest nobles of the land. The policy of the present government is, that there shall be no distinction between England and Ireland. I am therefore rather surprised that the cabinet are so 'indignant,' as a certain letter with which we have just been favoured informs us they are."

The Houses assembled February 4, 1851, and at once the papal bull became the prominent subject of discussion. "The recent assumption of certain ecclesiastical titles," said Her Majesty in the speech from the throne, "conferred by a foreign power, has excited strong feelings in this country, and large bodies of my subjects have presented addresses to me, expressing attachment to the throne, and praying that such assumptions should be resisted. I have assured them of my resolution to maintain the rights of my crown and the independence of the nation against all encroachment,

from whatever quarter it may proceed. I have at the same time expressed my earnest desire and firm determination, under God's blessing, to maintain unimpaired the religious liberty which is so justly prized by the people of this country. It will be for you to consider the measure which will be laid before you on this subject."

A lively debate then ensued. Lord John Russell made a long explanation as to the publication of the Durham letter; Mr. Roebuck bitterly attacked it for having been the means of creating an unworthy panic in the country, and condemned the cabinet for the course they had pursued with regard to the treatment of the Irish hierarchy. Mr. Disraeli also took part in the discussion. He did not think, he said, that the famous Durham letter was solely provoked by the appointment of Cardinal Wiseman as archbishop of Westminster. He believed the noble lord at the head of the government thought that the time had now arrived, when he felt that a great change would take place in the relations which must hereafter subsist between the Crown of England and the Pope of Rome, and the prime minister had availed himself of this last drop in the cup to adopt the policy which he had long meditated. He could not suppose that the noble lord only contemplated the bringing in of a bill to prevent Roman Catholics from styling themselves bishop or archbishop of any of the towns or cities in the queen's dominions; he could not be about to bring in any such measure as that, because then he would not have been justified in stirring up the passions of a mighty people, in exciting their highest and holiest feelings, and in raising in this country a spirit of controversy and polemical dispute which recalled the days of the Stuarts. "But if the noble lord," concluded Mr. Disraeli, "be prepared to do a great deal—if he be prepared to solve the great political problem that may not be incapable of solution, but that no minister has ever solved—then, indeed, he may be justified in the course he has taken; then,

indeed, he may lay claim to the reputation and the character of a great minister. Such is the measure he must bring in to authorize the course he has taken; such is the measure I for one would humbly support; such is the measure I believe the country expects; and if it does not receive it, I believe the opinions of Protestants and Roman Catholics on one point will be unanimous—that the conduct of the noble lord cannot be justified."

We know what was the measure which Lord John introduced. A bill was brought in to prevent the assumption by Roman Catholics of titles taken from any territory or place within the United Kingdom under penalty of a severe fine, and to render void all acts done by or bequests made to persons under such titles. The reception given to the measure could hardly have gratified the author. Mr. Roebuck declared that it was "one of the meanest, pettiest, and most futile measures that ever disgraced even bigotry itself." Mr. Bright said it was "a meresham to bolster up Church ascendancy." Mr. Disraeli was, however, the most trenchant critic of the bill. He would not oppose, he said, the introduction of the measure because he thought it important "that the people, the community in general, should see what is the result of that remarkable agitation which has been fostered by the government, and which has led, I admit, to a national demonstration seldom perhaps equalled." After all these heavings the mountain had been delivered, and this most ridiculous of mice was the result! "What!" he cried, "was it for this that the lord high chancellor of England trampled on a cardinal's hat, amid the patriotic acclamations of the metropolitan municipality? Was it for this that the first minister, with more reserve, delicately hinted to the assembled guests that there had been occasions when perhaps even greater danger was at hand, as, for instance, when the shadow of the Armada darkened the seas of England? Was it for this that all the counties and corporations of England met?

Was it for this that all our learned and religious societies assembled at a period the most inconvenient, in order, as they thought, to respond to the appeal of their sovereign, and to lose no time in assuring Her Majesty of their determination to guard her authority and her supremacy? Was it for this that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge—that the great city of London itself—went in solemn procession to offer at the foot of the throne the assurance of their devotion? Was it for this that the electric telegraph conveyed Her Majesty's response to those addresses, that not an instant might be lost in re-assuring the courage of the inhabitants of the metropolis? And what are these remedies? Some Roman Catholic priests are to be prevented from taking titles which they had already been prevented to a very considerable extent from taking by the existing law; the only difference being that they are now to be prevented from taking a territorial title which has not been assumed by a prelate of the National Church; while it seems that to that provision there is to be attached a penalty. But a penalty of what amount? One of 40s. perhaps. That is not yet stated, but a penalty of that amount would, in my opinion, be worthy of the occasion."

Throughout the progress of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill through the House of Commons Mr. Disraeli pursued the same course of banter and opposition. He called it "a blunder of the sudden," in allusion to the manner in which the prime minister had described the papal bull; he protested against the Whigs being allowed to govern the country by "a continual popish plot;" he objected to the penalty clause. "What a mockery," he cried, "when Her Majesty's ministers themselves be-Grace and be-Lord these individuals, that they should now propose penal enactments because they are treated by the rest of Her Majesty's subjects with respect and with honour!" After much discussion, to finish the story of this miserable piece of legislation, the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, with all the vigour

of its clauses eliminated in committee, became a law which was never obeyed and which was, after having been treated for some years with silent contempt, quietly erased from the statute-book. "The ministers," writes a recent historian, "were in fact in the difficulty of all statesmen who bring in a measure, not because they themselves are clear as to its necessity or its efficacy, but because they find that something must be done to satisfy public feeling, and they do not know of anything better to do at the moment. The history of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was therefore a history of blunder, unlucky accident, and failure from the moment it was brought in until its ignominious and ridiculous repeal many years after, and when its absolute impotence had been not merely demonstrated, but forgotten."

For a brief moment ministerial incapacity was to be interrupted. Mr. Disraeli had introduced a motion calling upon the cabinet to bring forward some measure for the relief of the agricultural interest, which was then terribly depressed; a division ensued, and the government won by a small majority. In the next struggle they were to sustain defeat. During the last few years the Reform Bill of 1832, in spite of the chorus of approval with which it had at first been received, had become the subject of much criticism among certain members of the Liberal party. It was said that it was not sufficiently comprehensive, that it was somewhat invidious in the nature of its clauses, and that there was scope for amendment with regard to various of its provisions. The most prominent amongst the discontented was Mr. Locke King, the member for East Surrey, a man of much energy, with a keen eye to all absurd or unjust entries in the statute-book, of no little eloquence, and of considerable popularity with his party. In the summer of 1850 he had asked leave to bring in a bill to make the franchise in counties in England and Wales the same as that in boroughs, by giving the right of voting to

all occupiers of tenements of the annual value of ten pounds. This motion was supported by Mr. Hume, of economical notoriety, by Mr. Bright, by Sir De Lacy Evans, who then represented Westminster, and by others of the more advanced section of the Liberals. It was opposed by Lord John Russell, though on a subsequent occasion when the bill came up for the second reading his lordship intimated that he was prepared to recede from his previous principle of "finality" and to disturb the parliamentary settlement of 1832.

Mr. Disraeli delivered a short speech on this occasion, expressing disapproval of Mr. Locke King's motion. He had been particularly struck, he said, at the erroneous apprehension on the part of several members of what the English constitution really was. Then, according to a custom not infrequent with him, he blended with his speech a little of the elements of a constitutional lecture. He had always believed that every gentleman, whatever his opinions might be as to the proper franchise for England or Ireland, had considered that the constitution of England was a monarchy, modified by estates of the realm—that was, by privileged classes, who were invested with those privileges for the advantage of the community. They had a Throne—they had a body of Peers, and a body of Commons, who were in possession of certain privileges, which privileges they might increase or diminish; but still those privileges had always been, and must remain, the privileges of particular orders, and enjoyed by only a limited portion of the community. They knew what was the result, whatever might have been the original intention of such a constitution. It had established the aristocratic principle in the widest and most noble sense of the term. But it had permitted all classes to aspire; and however society might be divided in olden days, there was no class which could say it did not possess the privilege of electing representatives to the House of Commons, from the proudest manorial lord

to the humblest artisan. Less than a quarter of a century ago that was the acknowledged state of things. However, they thought proper to terminate that scheme. It was terminated by Lord John Russell in his official capacity; enthusiastically supported by many members of the House. There was no member opposite who had not acquired his seat in the House by adopting the views of government, and the principles of the Reform party. They were responsible for, and they ought to be grateful to, the Reform Act. But now a great many gentlemen opposite seemed discontented with the settlement of 1832, who at that time were ready to vote black was white in its behalf—who went to the country for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill—who had so profoundly and so maturely investigated the question, that they resolved that the perfect scheme which they adopted should not be altered or modified, and who gave their deliberate consent to a change which they determined should be permanent. But ever since the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill, had been gained, the result appeared to give only partial satisfaction. Querulous complaints of the law were constantly heard from hon. gentlemen opposite, who were sent to that House by the operation of that law, and who represented what were called liberal opinions in that House. Those hon. gentlemen, they found, were constantly quarrelling with the political arrangements which sent them into the House.

He spoke not only his own feelings, continued Mr. Disraeli, but the feelings of many of his friends, when he said they had no superstitious reverence for the Reform Act. He admitted he would have opposed it had he been in the House at the time, brought forward as it was by a party, in opposition to whom, from historical conviction, he ever acted. But it was carried by a large majority; it was received as the settlement of a great public question—not a great party question. Still, though the Tories had no superstitious

reverence for the bill, they could not be blind to the great public inconvenience and injury likely to arise from the proceedings of certain gentlemen opposite, who, in a retail manner, were sapping that settlement which they accepted at the time with such wholesale enthusiasm. He did not think, he said, and let us remember his words when we have to deal with his bill of 1867, that it was a settlement that might not have been improved. He regretted that when the privileges of the working classes were abrogated, no equivalent was devised. He regretted that in the Reform Act the rights of the working classes were not more respected. But who voted against them? Who voted against the freemen? The liberal members, the clamourers for the whole bill, and nothing but the bill. He wished to know what hon. gentlemen opposite meant. Did they mean to say they would no longer endure the ancient constitution of the country—a monarchy modified by the political estates of the realm? If they were of opinion that every acre ought to be represented—every pound sterling of capital, and every individual of the population, ought to be represented in the House—if they said that, then he replied, they proposed a revolution in the constitution. If the House was to represent all material and personal interests, it was absurd to suppose any influence could be exercised by any other estate of the realm, or by the Crown itself. But were they prepared to do that? If so, why did they come forward with a £10 franchise, which, when met by an amendment, they withdrew? Were they prepared to say that every man "full grown" should be entitled to the suffrage, and ought to be allowed to exercise it? Why not make the proposition? On the contrary, the most eminent members of their party had made speeches against it. They did not propose that; they disclaimed it; they shrank from it; they admitted that it was dangerous. Now, would these reformers meet the question fairly, and tell the

House that they were prepared to change the constitution of the country? They would not. Not one of them would do that, because they knew that their answer would be that they would have then to entrust privileges to persons they would not confer them on.

"Is the possession of the franchise to be a privilege," asked Mr. Disraeli, "the privilege of industry and public virtue, or is it to be a right—the right of every one, however degraded, however indolent, however unworthy? I am for the system," he continued, "which maintains in this country a large and free government, having confidence in the energies and the faculties of man. Therefore, I say, make the franchise a privilege, but let it be the privilege of the civic virtues. Hon. gentlemen opposite would degrade the franchise to the man, instead of raising the man to the franchise. If you want to have a free aristocratic country—free because aristocratic—I use the word aristocratic in its noblest sense—I mean that aristocratic freedom which enables every man to achieve the best position in the state to which his qualities entitle him; I know not that we can do better than adhere to the mitigated monarchy of England, with power in the Crown, order in one estate of the realm, and liberty in the other. It is from that happy combination that we have produced a state of society that all other nations look upon with admiration and envy."

Shortly after the bare victory of the Whigs upon Mr. Disraeli's motion to relieve the agricultural interest, the member for East Surrey a second time brought forward his pet scheme for the consideration of the House. The motion was again opposed by Lord John Russell, but on this occasion the ministers sustained a severe defeat; and the premier, aware of the unpopularity of the cabinet, felt he had no alternative but to tender his resignation to the queen. And now the usual anxiety prevailed as to who was to be the successor. There was no lack of material out of which a cabinet

might be formed, if the different elements would put aside their prejudices and coalesce. There were the Whigs, the Protectionists, and the followers of Sir Robert Peel; a coalition between either of these parties would form a strong government; without such coalition any government taking office would be weak. No combination could, however, be effected; each party had its own favourite measures which it declined to throw over. The Conservatives would not abandon the policy of protection; the Peelites would have nothing to do with the wretched Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, then in all the throes of amendments, whilst nothing would induce the Whigs to forsake the bill. Lord John Russell essayed to effect a coalition with the followers of Sir Robert Peel, and failed. Lord Aberdeen, the leader of the Peelites, declined in the present condition of the country as to the hatred expressed against papal aggression, to form an administration. Lord Stanley then tried his hand, but was not successful. Thus, after some little delay, and much feverish expectancy on the part of the Tadpoles and the Tapers, there was no other course to be adopted than for the late cabinet again to take office. After an interregnum of eleven days Her Majesty, having had a consultation with the Duke of Wellington, commanded Lord John Russell and his colleagues to resume their respective posts. This order was publicly announced March 3, 1851.

It was evident to all that the re-instated cabinet was a makeshift, which would soon go the way of all governments holding their power on sufferance. The opening of the Great Exhibition—that "unwieldy, ill-devised, unwholesome castle of glass," as Colonel Sibthorp called it—"up-springing from the verdant sod" in Hyde Park, for a time diverted the attention of the critical public from the blunders of the Ministry; but soon Lord John Russell and his colleagues, by their promises unfulfilled, their inconsistencies, and their incapacity to interpret the wishes of the nation, brought

themselves into still further discredit. The budget of Sir Charles Wood caused universal dissatisfaction ; and as Mr. Disraeli pointed out, the boasted surplus had been cut down to half of its original estimate, owing to certain claims made upon the government by the East India Company. In addition to this disappointment, the measures introduced for the relief of the agricultural interest had been withdrawn. The continuation of the income tax was also unpopular. When it had first been introduced the free traders were most hostile to the measure ; it had been stigmatized as "a fungus growing from the tree of monopoly," and as "the most unequal, most unjust, and most vexatious" of imposts. Yet the party which condemned it when in opposition now retained it when in power. Indeed, as Mr. Disraeli said, they could not do without it, for that tax was "the foundation of the new commercial system," the "only security for the continuance of free trade." But what dealt the final blow to the tottering cabinet was what the French called *l'affaire Palmerston*.

The foreign secretary was undoubtedly the ablest man in the government ; his memorable speech on the Don Pacifico debate proved that he had a command of language, and a ready mastery of details, with which until then he had not been credited. A man of great quickness in the despatch of business, somewhat impulsive and hasty in his expressions, both in his official correspondence and conversation, and of much independence of character, it was his custom as foreign secretary to take more upon himself than properly appertained to his post. According to the strict rules of official etiquette it was the duty of the minister who presided over the Foreign Office to transmit all important despatches to the chief of the cabinet for perusal, which were afterwards laid before the sovereign for the royal approval. Lord Palmerston, however, preferred to ignore this custom ; he not only forwarded important state papers to the different embassies

without first showing them to the prime minister, but he went so far as to transmit them without deigning to consult the opinion of his sovereign. This culpable independence of conduct had on more than one occasion compromised the Crown, without the Crown having been in the least aware of what the course was that had been pursued. The prince consort, who was deeply interested in foreign affairs, and upon whose sound judgment, accurate prescience, and carefully considered conclusions, the queen naturally much relied, was offended at the easy manner in which the foreign secretary replied to despatches without due consideration, and without consulting either Her Majesty or his colleagues in the cabinet. He brought the matter before the Duke of Wellington, who occupied very much the same position to the court as the family solicitor does to an ordinary household, and asked him whether, when he was premier, he had not been in the habit of interfering in the Foreign Office. The duke answered most emphatically, "There never went a paper which I had not brought to me first ; but Palmerston could at no time be trusted, as he was always anxious to do things by himself." It was now considered necessary to read our hasty and independent foreign secretary a lesson which would bring him to his bearings, and restrain his freedom of action in the future. Lord John Russell, who it appears had more than once complained of the license of his subordinate in this matter—Lord John, who took newspapers into his confidence before extending it to his colleagues—was summoned to the Isle of Wight, and a grave consultation held. The deliberation resulted in the following severe memorandum being drawn up and forwarded to Lord Palmerston :—

"With reference to the conversation about Lord Palmerston which the queen had with Lord John Russell the other day, and Lord Palmerston's disavowal that he ever intended any disrespect to her by the various neglects of which she has had so long and so often to complain, she thinks it right,

in order to prevent any mistake for the future, to explain what it is she expects from the foreign secretary.

"She requires :

"First, That he distinctly state what he proposes to do in a given case, in order that the queen may know as distinctly to what she has given her royal sanction.

"Second, Having once given her sanction to a measure, that it be not arbitrarily altered or modified by the minister; such an act she must consider as failure in sincerity towards the Crown, and justly to be visited by the exercise of her constitutional right of dismissing that minister. She expects to be kept informed of what passes between him and the foreign ministers, before important decisions are taken based upon that intercourse ; to receive the foreign despatches in good time, and to have the drafts for her approval sent to her in sufficient time to make herself acquainted with their contents before they must be sent off. The queen thinks it best that Lord John Russell should show this letter to Lord Palmerston.

"OSBORNE, August 12, 1850."

The foreign secretary received this rebuke with perfect temper, and behaved in the matter like the high-minded gentleman he really was. He replied in his usual pleasant manner to his chief. He had taken, he said, a copy of the memorandum and would not fail to attend to the directions which it contained ; he explained why he had not in the past sent despatches to the queen, and promised to give no further cause for complaint in the future ; then he good-humouredly added that if it were necessary for him to have an additional clerk or two to do any extra work, the Treasury, perhaps, would not grudge the expense. We shall learn afterwards the reason why he acted on this occasion with this well-bred restraint.

For a time the foreign secretary conformed to the instructions he had received, and behaved with the caution and discretion which generally follow a severe reproof. But independence of action was too strongly woven in the texture of his mind for him to remain long controlled and repressed. The English people had sympathized strongly with Hungary in her revolt against Austria ; and when Louis

Kossuth, who had been dictator of Hungary during the greater part of the insurrection, reached our shores he was the lion of the hour, and received quite an ovation wherever he showed himself. Lord Palmerston keenly sympathized with the Hungarians, and had used his influence to prevent the surrender of Kossuth to Austria. Under the prevailing excitement it struck certain inhabitants of the Tower Hamlets, Finsbury, and Islington that the present moment would be an excellent opportunity to show their appreciation of the conduct of Lord Palmerston in the matter. Accordingly addresses were drawn up, in which the foreign secretary was thanked for what he had done towards securing the safety and liberation of the "illustrious patriot and exile ;" whilst the Emperors of Austria and Russia were stigmatized as "odious and detestable assassins" and "merciless tyrants and despots"—terms, whether true or not, scarcely to be used without reproof before an English foreign secretary concerning sovereigns with whom England was at peace. Lord Palmerston, however, took no notice of these offensive epithets in the addresses handed to him, beyond saying that "he could not be expected to concur in some of the expressions," and declared himself "extremely flattered and highly gratified" at the compliment paid him by the enlightened population of the Tower Hamlets, Finsbury, and Islington. The whole proceeding was, however, viewed with extreme displeasure by the queen and the prince consort. "It is no question with the queen," wrote Her Majesty to the prime minister, "whether she pleases the Emperor of Austria or not, but whether she gives him a just ground of complaint. And if she does so, she can never believe that this will add to her popularity with her own people." At the express wish of the queen the conduct of Lord Palmerston was brought before a cabinet council. No formal resolution as to the want of caution displayed by the foreign secretary on this occasion was adopted; but Lord John Russell

wrote to the queen expressing a hope that the deliberation of the council would have its effect upon Lord Palmerston, and that he himself had specially urged upon his colleague the necessity of guarded conduct in the present very critical condition of Europe.

And now this *enfant terrible* of the cabinet was to show how he interpreted the words "guarded conduct." The very day he had received this piece of advice, the news of the *coup d'état* in Paris reached London. The queen, most anxious that nothing should be said by Lord Normanby, our representative at Paris, to commit England to any expression of approval of what had been done, sent full instructions to Lord John Russell to that effect. Thus directed, Lord Palmerston wrote officially to Lord Normanby, informing him that he was to make no change in his diplomatic relations with the French government. To this despatch our ambassador returned a reply, which created an immense sensation throughout the kingdom. He wrote that having called on M. Turgot, the French minister for foreign affairs, to communicate the instructions he had received from Her Majesty's government, he was informed by that gentleman that Count Walewski, the French ambassador in London, had written to Paris that Lord Palmerston had expressed in conversation his entire approval of the course Louis Napoleon had pursued! Was such indiscretion possible? The queen at once wrote to Lord John Russell:—

"The queen sends the enclosed despatch from Lord Normanby to Lord John Russell, from which it appears that the French government pretend to have received the entire approval of the late *coup d'état* by the British government, as conveyed by Lord Palmerston to Count Walewski. The queen cannot believe in the truth of the assertion, as such an approval given by Lord Palmerston would have been in *complete* contradiction to the line of strict neutrality and passiveness which the queen had expressed her desire to see followed with regard to the late convulsions at Paris, and which was approved by the cabinet, as stated in Lord John Russell's letter of the 6th inst. Does Lord John know anything about

the alleged approval, which, if true, would again expose the honesty and dignity of the queen's government in the eyes of the world?

"OSBORNE, December 18, 1851."

Lord Palmerston was called upon for an explanation. He delayed furnishing any statement as to his conduct for some days; but when the document had been drawn up, it fully showed that, in direct defiance of the queen's commands, and without any consultation with his colleagues, he had taken upon himself to thoroughly approve of the steps the prince-president had taken. Such gross insubordination and compromising activity could not be passed over. Lord Palmerston was requested by his chief to resign the seals of the Foreign Office, and Lord Granville was sworn in as his successor.

Parliament met February 3, 1852. The Palmerston case was, of course, uppermost in men's minds, and the House of Commons was eager to listen to ministerial explanations. In the debate on the address the prime minister took the first opportunity of stating the facts of the case. He narrated fully the history of the differences which had long existed between Lord Palmerston and his colleagues; he stated the rebuffs the foreign secretary had brought upon himself from the court; and much to the astonishment of the House, he for the first time informed it of the severe memorandum drawn up by the queen. Lord Palmerston strongly objected to this document having been made public; and in his recent biography he gives his reasons why he received the memorandum so submissively, at the same time complaining of the conduct of Lord John Russell.

"I said to the Duke [of Bedford]," he writes to Lord Lansdowne, "that it was very unhandsome by me, and very wrong by the queen, for him, John Russell, to have read in the House of Commons the queen's angry memorandum of August, 1850, hinting at dismissal. In regard to the queen, he was thus dragging her into the discussion, and making her a party to a

question which constitutionally ought to be, and before parliament could only be, a question between me and the responsible adviser of the Crown; and I said that this mention of the queen as a party to the transaction had given rise to newspaper remarks much to be regretted, and which the prime minister ought not to have given an occasion for. I said that, as regards myself, the impression created by his reading that memorandum was, that I had submitted to an affront which I ought not to have borne; and several of my friends told me, after the discussion, that they wondered I had not sent in my resignation on receiving that paper from the queen through John Russell. My answer to those friends, I said, had been that the paper was written in anger by a lady as well as by a sovereign, and that the difference between a lady and a man could not be forgotten even in the case of the occupant of a throne; but I said that, in the first place, I had no reason to suppose that this memorandum would ever be seen by, or be known to anybody but the queen, John Russell, and myself; that, secondly, my position at that moment, namely, in August, 1850, was peculiar. I had lately been the object of violent political attack, and had gained a great and signal victory in the House of Commons and in public opinion: to have resigned then would have been to have given the fruits of victory to adversaries whom I had defeated, and to have abandoned my political supporters at the very moment when by their means I had triumphed. But, beyond all that, I had represented to my friends, by pursuing the course which they thought I ought to have followed, I should have been bringing for decision at the bar of public opinion a personal quarrel between myself and my sovereign—a step which no subject ought to take, if he can possibly avoid it; for the result of such a course must be either fatal to him or injurious to the country. If he should prove to be in the wrong, he would be irretrievably condemned; if the sovereign

should be proved to be in the wrong, the monarchy would suffer."

In the debate that ensued, Mr. Disraeli was not silent.

The queen's speech had been read, and it was on the occasion of moving an address in answer to the communication from the throne that the leader of the Opposition subjected the cabinet to his criticism. He dealt first with the dismissal of Lord Palmerston, and then examined the other matters contained in the speech. He complained that the explanation of the prime minister as to the dismissal of his colleague was not satisfactory; it appeared to him "a Downing Street eclogue," and the reasons given were insufficient to account "for circumstances so remarkable, and a catastrophe so sudden." The political system represented by Lord Palmerston Mr. Disraeli had always felt it his duty to oppose, though he had ever regarded the late foreign secretary as a faithful British minister, believing that the great object of his policy was to maintain and vindicate the honour and the interests of England. But he had never severed the noble lord from the policy of the cabinet; and if that policy were to be continued, as he understood from the queen's speech, he would rather have it administered by the late foreign secretary, whom they all recognized to be able, than by any other person he saw upon the Treasury Bench. The past errors were not personal to Lord Palmerston; they must be attributed to the entire cabinet, and the noble lord should not be treated as the scapegoat. Mr. Disraeli also complained of the manner in which the prime minister had introduced the name of the sovereign into his speech.

"I am bound to say," said he, and here for the first time in the House of Commons we listen to him expressing his views as to the majesty of the Crown, that it should be a real power in the state, and not, as the Whigs wished to make it, merely an ornament. "I am bound to say, that I cannot at this moment recall any analogous occasion in which the name

of the sovereign was so frequently and peculiarly used. Whatever was done at the command of the sovereign was at least done on the responsibility of the noble lord ; and though it may be expedient that minutes should be read to this House, which we are informed were drawn up by a personage whose name is rarely introduced in our debates, I must express my astonishment at the narrative of midnight despatches which were the cause, as I understand—though I may have misapprehended the noble lord—of conduct on his part of a very urgent, not to say a precipitate nature. Now, I suppose, that for everything which has been done the noble lord, the first minister, is responsible, and the noble lord, the first minister, is not a man to shrink from his responsibility: I am at a loss, therefore, to comprehend how the noble lord will account for that introduction of Her Majesty's name—that frequent and unnecessary introduction—which has taken place in the debate tonight. As I am one of those who never could have voted for that famous motion in this House, that 'the power of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished ;' as, *in fact*, I should be willing to hail as a fact, the converse of that proposition ; and as I think it one of the great misfortunes of our time, and one most injurious to public liberty, that the power of the Crown has diminished, I am not one likely to look with an unnecessary jealousy on the assertion of the prerogative of the Crown. But the noble lord is the eminent representative of a political party that has adopted opinions of a very different character. The noble lord is a member of the party which introduced, as I think, to our disgrace, that resolution upon the journal of the House ;* and cer-

tainly, therefore, I am astonished that the noble lord, on an occasion like the present, should have come forward, and, as it seems to me, have shifted from himself a responsibility which, under the circumstances, he should have been the first to adopt."

Mr. Disraeli then proceeded to criticise the various clauses in the speech from the throne. He did not consider the moment favourable, as the prime minister had stated, for the re-opening of the question of parliamentary reform; but he would consider the proposition of the noble lord when it came before them entirely without prejudice. He complained of the manner in which our colonies had been administered, and which had resulted in another disgracefully-conducted Kaffir war. Then he alluded to the time that had been wasted in the passing of the wretched Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. Had it vindicated the outrage which was offered to their sovereign and her kingdom ? Had it punished the "insolent aggression ?" Had it baffled that great European conspiracy against the realm of England and the Protestant faith ? Why, they all knew that it had been treated with a contumely which could not be expressed, and with a derision which it certainly merited ! The great cardinal, who had been ordered to quit England, was still within the realm ; "and I find him advertised in the newspapers in the exercise of his official duties as the lord cardinal archbishop of Westminster." Why was there no mention of this flagrant violation of the law in the queen's speech ? Another grave omission he could not pass over. Why was there no expression of sympathy with the difficulties of the cultivators of the soil ? All their difficulties had been occasioned by legislation, and therefore they were bound to consider whether those difficulties could not also be remedied by legislation.

"Have," he said, "as free an exchange of commodities as you please, but take care first that you place the British producer upon terms of equality with those with whom he has to compete ; take care that

* It was during the administration of Lord North that the personal influence of the sovereign attained its highest pitch. According to Fox, the king was "his own unadvised minister." At length, in 1780, Mr. Dunning proposed and carried, in the House of Commons, his notorious resolution, affirming "that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." Two years afterwards, Lord North, who had been in office from 1770 to 1782, was compelled to resign.

your legislation does not oppress him with burdens which he alone bears, and beneath the weight of which he must inevitably sink." He then quoted the opinions of Mr. McCulloch that the cultivator of the soil was subjected to unjust taxation which no other class of the community shared, and to injurious restrictions on his industry; and since it was impossible to adjust that taxation with absolute equality or to terminate those restrictions with a due consideration to the revenue, the just and scientific means by which a fair adjustment could be arrived at were by countervailing duties; but, added the political economist, just as these duties would be, the opportunity for applying them had been lost, and the cultivators of the soil, in the present temper of the country, must submit to the injustice which was oppressing them.*

"That," cried Mr. Disraeli, "is the political morality of a political economist. If the data of Mr. McCulloch be correct, I say the consequence that he draws from them is an immoral consequence; and I say that the legislation that is founded upon them is an immoral legislation. If it be the conviction of parliament that any class of producers is subject to unjust taxation, and is subject to it that another class of the community may be benefited by that taxation, they act immorally in upholding that system. It is confiscation in another guise; it is robbery under the *formulae* of political economy. Remember what this class is which for the last three or four years has been so severely suffering, and is now so severely suffering. Who are these farmers whom gentlemen opposite seem to hold so light? Why, they are the largest employers of labour in the United Kingdom. The farmers of the United Kingdom are the most numerous and the most important portion of the middle class. I know there may be some of my friends who, remembering the insolence with which they have been treated by a section of the middle

class flushed with unexpected success, may naturally not be indisposed to triumph at the present altered position of the middle class throughout Europe, . . . that after all was only a limited section of the middle-class. The power and prosperity of the middle class are inseparable from the greatness of England [Mr. Disraeli objected to the middle classes only when they inspired and controlled a government, not when they formed a part of it]; and the most numerous portion of it is peculiarly represented on this side of the House. For my part I owe my seat to the middle class; the farmers of England sent me here, and therefore I protest against unequal laws which impair their fortunes." It was the duty of the government to remedy such evils. If the agricultural interest could not be relieved from those injurious restrictions and those unjust taxes, at least they should have that countervailing compensation which was their due on a fair consideration of the subject. He saw around him no very felicitous results of the new system. He saw the cultivators of the soil growing poorer and poorer. He saw a list of bankrupt merchants, and secret societies of amalgamated mechanics. He saw classes arrayed against each other. No political system, he concluded, could be sound which had resulted in circumstances so menacing and so ruinous.

The dismissal of Lord Palmerston was looked upon not only as a great blow to the Liberal cause throughout Europe, but as the collapse of a career from which great things had been expected. The defence of the foreign secretary, very different from his brilliant speech on the Don Pacifico debate, was weak, and consequently made but a poor impression upon the House; it was now fully known that the late minister was disliked by the court; he had played his part badly in the theatre of diplomacy, the curtain had descended amid disapproval, and he was not likely to have another engagement. "There *was* a Palmerston," said Mr. Disraeli in his peculiar tone to

* A Treatise on Taxation and the Funding System, by J. R. McCulloch, pp. 195-202, Longman's, 1852.

a friend whom he met at the Russian embassy. The ex-minister, however, was not depressed at the prospect of his future. He took his punishment very quietly; he would bide his time until an opportunity would offer itself, and then, he said, he would give "Johnny Russell tit-for-tat."

"I must say," writes Lord Dalling in his chatty biography of Lord Palmerston, "that I never admired him so much as at this crisis. He evidently thought he had been ill-treated; but I never heard him make an unfair and irritable remark, nor did he seem in any wise stunned by the blow he had received, or dismayed by the isolated position in which he stood. I should say that he seemed to consider that he had a quarrel put upon him, which it was his wisest course to close by receiving the fire of his adversary and not returning it. He could not, in fact, have gained a victory against the premier on the ground which Lord John Russell had chosen for the combat, which would not have been more permanently disadvantageous to him than a defeat. The faults of which he had been accused did not touch his own honour, nor that of his country. Let them be admitted, and there was an end of the matter. By and by an occasion would probably arise in which he might choose an advantageous occasion for giving battle, and he was willing to wait calmly for that occasion."

His patience was not put to a severe test. Before, however, he was to taste the sweets of revenge the often agitated question of parliamentary reform was again to come before the House. In the speech from the throne Her Majesty had said, "It appears to me that this is a fitting time for calmly considering whether it may not be advisable to make such amendments in the Act of the last reign relating to the representation of the Commons in parliament, as may be deemed calculated to carry into more complete effect the principles upon which that law is founded." Accordingly, early in the session, February 9, 1852, Lord John Russell rose to move for leave to bring in

"a bill to extend the right of voting for members of parliament, and to amend the laws relating to the representation of the people." Briefly, the result of his measure was to reduce the franchise in counties to twenty pounds rated value, and in boroughs to five pounds rated value; to extend the franchise to all persons, whether in counties or boroughs, who paid direct taxes to the amount of forty shillings a year; and to group with neighbouring towns all boroughs with less than 500 electors. He estimated such boroughs to be sixty-seven in number. Various members on both sides of the House took part in the debate, and it was somewhat late before Mr. Disraeli rose to express his opinion upon the provisions of the new measure.

After a few remarks as to the inconvenience of the bill not being ready to be placed in the hands of members, and as to the advisability of the House to have full time to consider the scheme before the second reading came on, he briefly commented upon the novelties proposed by Lord John Russell. He would reserve further criticism, he said, for another occasion, when the subject was fairly before the House. He, however, congratulated parliamentary reformers on the content with which they had accepted the repast provided for them; the voracity of their appetites seemed to him satisfied with short commons. His impression, in listening to the statement of the noble lord, had been, that there was nothing in it which had any tendency to disturb, he would not say the balance between the two great interests of the country, but he would rather say the adjustment made by the Reform Bill in 1832. He did not use the word balance, because he did not think any such balance existed. He thought the adjustment of 1832 gave a preponderance to the towns and the commercial classes. To that adjustment they bowed. So far as he could discover from the oral statement of the minister, he did not think there was

anything in that new plan which had a serious tendency to disturb it; and therefore, on that ground, as no change would probably be in their favour, he felt considerably relieved. At the same time, he must tell the hon. member for Manchester (Mr. Bright) that he could not at all accept his dogma, that the present adjustment was unfair because a borough like Thetford returned two members, and a city like Manchester returned no greater number.* Throughout the whole of the arguments he had heard on that subject from gentlemen opposite, both here and as reported in other places, a great fallacy was observable, and pervaded all that they brought forward on the subject, as he should be prepared to show at the right time and on the fitting occasion. The hon. gentleman had referred to the cases of Thetford and Manchester, and it was only because he had done so that he entered upon the subject at all now. The inference, founded on the two tests of population and property, that because a borough like Thetford returned two members, therefore Manchester should return the number of members proportionate to its population and property, was altogether erroneous. The inference, indeed, was the other way. It was that such places as Thetford should not return two members, not that Manchester should return more. A paper had just been put into his hands, which had some reference to that part of the subject. It related to North Cheshire. The total population of the county was

217,000 There were two considerable manufacturing towns, and only two, in that great division—Macclesfield, with a population of 33,000, and the too-celebrated Stockport, with a population of upwards of 50,000; together 83,000, which, deducted from the whole population of the northern division of Cheshire, left 134,000. Now, those two towns returned four members, though the county population, which amounted to 130,000, returned only two! Even admitting the tests laid down by the hon. member to be just, which he did not, it could never be inferred from it that Manchester should have eight, ten, or fourteen members, the burden always of the hon. gentleman's argument on that point—but only that Thetford should *not* have two members.

With regard to the second condition, that there should be no attempt to establish the undue preponderance of any particular party, he must reserve his opinion till they had the details before them. When he saw how the government proposed to deal with sixty or seventy boroughs; when he saw what those boroughs were, and how they were to be managed under the new arrangement—then he should better know how to form an opinion. But he should assume now that in 1852, after the experience on these subjects which the House had acquired, any of those not very creditable manœuvres as to the settlement of boundaries which distinguished the first Reform Bill, would not very easily occur. He could not believe that any party in the House, or out of it, would support a minister in any arrangement of the new boroughs, the object of which was to support his own party in parliament: he had that confidence in the increased knowledge both of the House of Commons and the country on those subjects, as to feel that such manœuvres could not be repeated.

He confessed, so far as he could form an opinion, that his impression was that the bill was one of very questionable propriety. The noble lord had on several occasions

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dilated on the wisdom of settling great questions in moments of comparative calm and tranquillity. He agreed with him. He thought it was wise in a statesman if he had a subject of great importance to grapple with, a subject calculated to arouse the passions and affect the interests of great masses of the people, that he should attempt it in moments of tranquillity; but he was bound to deal with it so that the settlement might be—he would not say final, for that was not an epithet suitable to human legislation—but permanent. So far as he could now form an opinion, he could not say that he thought the measure brought forward by the noble lord in that sense a very statesmanlike measure. What was the great object of the £5 franchise? That they should admit the working classes to the exercise of the suffrage. *He had always been the advocate of an industrial suffrage;* but he was not satisfied that that £5 franchise would act in that way. He was not by any means clear that there was no measure better fitted for that purpose, no arrangement more apposite and more calculated to effect that end, than merely lowering the amount on which the suffrage depended.

Still he was not prepared to interpose any obstruction to the bill of the noble lord. He had much hesitation as to the propriety of introducing any measure at all on the present occasion. He had his doubts, too, whether the measure introduced was of that deep and comprehensive character required. He thought the noble lord ought to bear in mind that it was of the utmost importance that a question of that kind should be maturely considered before it was decided on; that all measures for the adjustment of the franchise should be of a permanent character. He thought it would be just as well for hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House that the measure, then introduced by the minister of the crown and supported by them, should be one that would be likely to last. The hon. gentlemen opposite had now had some experience in that matter. They

received with enthusiasm the bill of 1832; they denounced everybody who opposed it, and insisted that it would in every respect answer their purpose; they said nothing less would satisfy them, and nothing more would they accept; yet they had been mistaken. He thought they ought to consider—he would not say with suspicion, but without passion—the proposition of the minister on that occasion. It should be remembered, too, that they had many other important subjects to discuss during the present session; and he warned them not to be diverted in their attention from other great reforms by parliamentary reform. The great body of the nation would not be satisfied if the entire time of the session was occupied with discussions on parliamentary reform. The people out of doors wished the whole question of colonial government to be considered—the people out of doors wished to have the principles of taxation properly established—the people out of doors were anxious to know whether there would be any law reform or not. These were reasons why they should not approach the subject thrown before them with any degree of passion; that they should try to ascertain whether the time really needed such a change as that then proposed; whether that change was required by the nation; and whether the proposition of the government was calculated to satisfy it.

An event not unexpected, but which, when it came, took the political world by surprise, was, however, to interfere with the progress of this the latest development in reform. The opportunity was about to present itself for Lord Palmerston to take his revenge. For some time past a feeling of uneasiness had prevailed as to the condition of England in case, owing to the then turbulent condition of Europe, a war should break out. "I am perfectly willing to believe," said Mr. Disraeli in the debate on the address, "that no danger is at hand, and that the world will continue to be governed by the principles of peace, though we are going to increase our armaments and call out our

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militia; but no one can deny that, not only in the country, but throughout Europe, there is a feeling of apprehension." France was a disturbing element. We did not know what would be the next move of the prince-president whose policy was now, in order to render his position more sure, to flatter the vanity and pander to the ambition of his new subjects. It was both said and sung that the devil only knew what he meant. He was our ally, but it was the general impression that he would throw the *entente cordiale* to the winds if it would in any way benefit his purpose. We were advised to believe in the maxim *Fidarsi è bene, ma non fidarsi è meglio*. There was the usual scare of a foreign invasion, and the timorous, and indeed those who were not timorous, bade us look to our national defences, fortify our dockyards, keep our fleet ready to guard the coast, and our regiments at full strength, and have a strong mass of reserves in existence to be drawn upon when necessary. The volunteer system was proposed, and was eagerly embraced by the nation; before the year had closed, every town had its corps of trained civilians ready to bear arms, and, what was more to the point, possessing the knowledge of how to use them. So military and patriotic were the youth of the country that there was almost a feeling of disappointment when all prospect of an invasion seemed abandoned.

As one of the consequences of this warlike spirit, and of the dangers with which it was thought we were menaced, the government considered it prudent to inquire into the state of the militia. When we look upon our militia at the present day—the regiments well officered, the men smart and well drilled, the discipline as severe and exact as in the regular service—and compare it with the militia of "the good old days," when the officers, mostly civilians who had received no military instruction whatever, regarded the whole thing as the farce it really was, and only as an excuse for a month of amusement and pleasant festivities, whilst the men, drawn from the very

scum of the country, were a nuisance and the disgrace of every town in which they took up their quarters, the contrast is indeed striking. A Kaffir war, with its usual complement of military blunders and commissariat shortcomings, was then on our hands; and it became therefore very advisable to report upon the condition of our reserves in case of emergencies.

Accordingly Lord John Russell introduced a Militia Bill (February 20, 1852), which, among other changes, recommended the substitution of a local militia for the regular force. Mr. Disraeli took part in the debate that followed, but his remarks were very brief. The honours of the evening fell to Lord Palmerston, who, amid the cheers of the House, mercilessly criticised the bill. He wished to know whether the measure was to be founded on "the militia" or upon "a local militia." If it were to be founded on a local militia it would be of no use, as a local militia was not liable to be called out except in cases of actual invasion or of an enemy being in force off our coasts. Therefore if they were to have a militia it must be a regular militia, liable to be called out and to serve in any part of the United Kingdom when necessary. He proposed to substitute the word "regular" for the word "local," thus of course altering the whole character of the bill. The House was in favour of the substitution, and after a division the government found itself in a minority of eleven votes. Thereupon Lord John Russell resigned. "I have had my tit for tat with John Russell," writes Lord Palmerston to his brother, "and I turned him out on Friday last." It has been said that the real reason for the resignation of the cabinet was a fear of being defeated on a vote of censure as to the conduct of the Kaffir war, which was on the eve of being moved. "As it is," writes Lord Palmerston, "the late government have gone out on a question, which they have treated as a motion, merely asserting that they had lost the confidence

of the House; whereas, if they had gone out on a defeat upon the motion about the Cape, they would have carried with them the direct censure of the House of Commons."

Our then only comic paper took the matter up, and wrote a ballad upon it. Lord John is made thus to lament:—

"It was upon a Friday night
My motion I brought on;
When 'twixt leave for the bill and me,
Up started Palmerston!

"Straight the whole house broke out in cheers,
In spite of his disgrace;
He snubbed our bill, and with a sneer
Proposed his in its place.

"And when my turn to answer came,
The House was cold as ice;
'The game is done—I've won! I've won!'
Quoth he—and in a trice

"Out go the whips; M.P.'s rush out,
With Hayter and Lord Mark;
And from their whispers soon I see
That things are looking dark.

"And while the votes are adding up,
We wait; for 'twixt the lip and cup
Full often comes a slip;
Taper look'd blank and sick with fright,
And Tadpole's face in the gas gleam'd white;
From his brow the dew did drip.
In a minority we are,
In spite of Hayter's and Lord Mar-
cus' energetic whip!

"One after one, their places gone,
With stifled groan and sigh;
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang,
And reproach'd me with his eye.

"From treasury bench condemned to fly,
Their salaries forego;
Each seem'd to say as he pass'd me by,
'It's all your fault, you know.'

On the resignation of Lord John Russell, the Earl of Derby was commanded to form an administration. "It was on Saturday," said the incoming prime minister to his brother peers in the upper House, "that I received the, to me, surprising intelligence of the result of the division in the House of Commons, and of the consequent resignation of Her Majesty's ministers. On the evening of that day I had the honour of receiving from Her Majesty a command to

wait on her at the palace at half-past two o'clock on the following day. My lords, I had then to consider not what course it was my interest, but what course it was my public duty, to pursue. I had to weigh deliberately and candidly on the one side all the overwhelming difficulties of the situation in which I was placed—all the awful responsibility of the task which I felt I might be called upon to perform; I had to weigh, on the other side, what appeared to me the still more awful responsibility, if it could be imputed to me that from personal feelings and an unwillingness to take on myself either labour or responsibility, I had left by my act the queen and the country in the present times without an administration, however unworthy it might be. The noble lord opposite [Lord Aberdeen] will excuse me for saying that I saw little prospect of any other administration being speedily formed; and further, that I saw little prospect of advantage from the resignation of the late ministry being speedily followed by their resumption of the reins of government; and I therefore felt that however unequal to the task, however great the difficulties that might stand in the way—difficulties arising from my own position, and from those who agreeing with me in opinion, are still unable to command a majority in the other House of Parliament—still great as all these difficulties were, deliberately weighing and not overlooking them, I felt it my first duty to my sovereign and my country to determine that at this time the country should not be without an administration; and it was not, my lords, without a deep consciousness of the responsibility I was incurring, nor without a thorough conviction of my own inability to perform adequately the duties I was about to undertake, that I at once intimated to Her most Gracious Majesty, on receiving her commands to that effect, my readiness to attempt the task of the formation of a Ministry."

Thus passed into the cold shade of opposition the government of Lord John Russell.

CHAPTER VII.

OFFICE.

WITH the exception of its chief and his lieutenant, the cabinet formed by Lord Derby was far from a strong one. It was composed of peers almost unknown twenty miles outside their park gates, and country gentlemen, excellent chairmen of quarter-sessions, but who had never prominently come before the public or had made themselves a name in the House of Commons. It was essentially an administration of untried men. Shortly after the new premier had prepared his list of those to serve under him, the Duke of Wellington, anxious to learn who were to constitute the Tory administration, took the first opportunity, when Lord Derby entered the House of Lords, to ask the names of those who had agreed to hold office. As the prime minister went through the catalogue, the duke, who had of late years become rather deaf and who had never heard before of several of the newly-created ministers, kept up throughout the whole conversation a running query of "who ? who ?" in the loud tones of a deaf person. The peers opposite, much amused at this incessant interrogation and also at the perplexed air of his Grace as name after name of men he had never met, and of whose political existence he had until then been in total ignorance, was bawled into his ears, at once christened the new cabinet the "who ? who ? ministry." The nickname was quickly taken up by club idlers and the editors of newspapers, and the Derby administration during the first weeks of its career was never designated by any other title than that conferred on it by Whig wit.

Lord Derby had for many years been one of the brilliant stars in the firmament of the political world. His powers as a par-

liamentary debater were unrivalled, and as Mr. Stanley, there had been few men in the House of Commons who more instinctively detected the flaws in an argument, and were more effective when put up to crush an opponent or lay bare the faults of a measure. The fire of his eloquence, and the dashing onslaughts he was in the habit of making upon the enemy, had gained him the title of the "Rupert of debate." He was a brilliant classic, well read without any affectation of erudition; and when he chose to conquer his carelessness and indolence of temperament, he possessed a grasp over the details of business such as few of the Manchester school could surpass. Conscious of his rank, proud of himself, and naturally of a somewhat haughty disposition, he was not given to pay much attention to the opinions of those with whom he acted, and who were inferior to him in station. They might follow him or they might desert him (he did not care very much which alternative they accepted), but they should not lead him. He held his own views, and he would carry them out; he often arrived at his conclusions after but a hasty and superficial inspection, and not infrequently found them untenable. Mr. Disraeli had said that his lordship had been rightly named the Prince Rupert of debate, since, however brilliant his attack, he generally found on his return that his camp had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Before being placed at the head of a cabinet, Lord Derby had seen some service in the state. During the early part of his career he had been an advocate of the principles of reform, and under the administration of Lord Grey had held office first as chief secretary for Ireland,

and afterwards as secretary of state for the colonies. When the Reform Bill was brought forward he defended its provisions with great warmth and eloquence, and also carried the bill for national education in Ireland. He gave his vote in favour of the emancipation of the West India slaves, and indeed was one of the principal agents to whom the success of the measure was due. But now it was that he severed himself from the Liberal party. The proposal to reduce still further the Irish Church establishment met with his strongest disapproval, and he resigned his seat in the cabinet. In the administration of Sir Robert Peel he held the seals again as colonial minister; but on the "apostacy" of that minister he threw in his fortunes with the Protectionists, and became the leader of the Conservative party. Impatient of control, and irritable under instruction, he yet permitted his able lieutenant to assume an authority over him which no one before had ever exercised.

In the ministry of which Lord Derby was the chief, there were a few names which subsequently attained if not to fame at least to respectable distinction. Lord Malmesbury was foreign secretary; Sir John Pakington was the colonial secretary; Mr. Walpole was at the Home Office; Major Beresford was at the War Office; Mr. Herries, who had been chancellor of the exchequer under Lord Goderich, and who had afterwards been secretary-at-war, presided over the Board of Control; Mr. Henley, then almost unknown, but who afterwards developed into the best representative of the landed interest the country has possessed since the days of Sir William Wyndham, was president of the Board of Trade; Lord John Manners was first commissioner of works; Lord St. Leonards, a sound lawyer but no politician, was lord chancellor; the attorney-general was Sir Frederick Thesiger, afterwards the first Lord Chelmsford; the solicitor-general was Sir Fitzroy Kelly. Last but far from least, since he was the ruling spirit of the cabinet, Mr. Disraeli

was appointed to the post of chancellor of the exchequer; and the charming humour of the pencil and the brush represented him, with three hats upon his head, toiling along Downing Street with an old clothes bag over his shoulder, upon which was labelled "budget."

In this elevation to high office we have another instance of how exceptional was the political career of the late Lord Beaconsfield. Since the development of parliamentary government during the last fifty years the pursuit of politics has become a profession, in which the prizes at its disposal are given, more as the rewards of ability, industry, and experience than as the consequences of lofty station and social combinations. The days are past when a foolish peer had a seat in the cabinet on account of the boroughs in his gift, or when the young man of fashion, favoured by a powerful minister, drew his salary as a vice-president or an under-secretary of state. If we examine the administrations before the Reform Bill of 1832 we shall find that men, at an age when they would now seldom be asked to serve on important committees, then held the seals of high and responsible office. St. John (afterwards Lord Bolingbroke) and Sir Robert Walpole at thirty-two were secretaries-at-war; at twenty-three the second Pitt was chancellor of the exchequer; at thirty-five the Marquis of Rockingham became first lord of the Treasury; Lord Shelburne was president of the Board of Trade at twenty-six; Canning was foreign secretary at six and thirty; at thirty-two Addington was speaker of the House of Commons; and coming down to more modern times we find the first Lord Durham privy seal at six and thirty; Lord Palmerston secretary-at-war at twenty-five; Sir James Graham first lord of the Admiralty at thirty-seven; Sir Robert Peel chief secretary for Ireland at thirty-four; Wellesley governor-general of India at thirty-seven; Lord Normanby lord-lieutenant of Ireland at the same age; Macaulay secretary-at-war before he was

forty, and numerous other instances of men before they had reached their prime holding some of the most important posts under the crown.

This rapid advancement is now no longer regarded with approval by the country. We require those raised to high and responsible office to be men not only of ability, but of long parliamentary experience; and unless these conditions are fulfilled, we decline to place much confidence in the appointments. The mere talent of youth inspires us with no faith, nor do we rate at a high value the mere experience which age seldom fails to afford. We have no objection to the humbler posts in an administration being occupied by youthful genius or untried ability; but we demand that those higher offices which entitle a member to a seat in the cabinet should only be conferred upon those who have *proved* themselves worthy of being intrusted with the interests of the nation. As men on the turf judge of the horses entered for an important race by their past performances at inferior meetings, so on examining the list of a cabinet does the country estimate the value of the ministers constituting it by their past conduct when in an inferior capacity. Every member of a cabinet has invariably served the Crown previously to his appointment within the inner circle of the administration in some more modest post—as a junior lord, or an under-secretary of state, or as the vice-president of some board or another, and the like; and thus both the Crown and the nation have had an opportunity of judging how far the individual is calculated to do justice to the higher appointment. When Mr. Disraeli was called to preside over the finances of the country, he had never held any office—not even the most subordinate—in the state; his appointment is almost the only instance in our history of a politician entering the exclusive arena of the cabinet without having first won his spurs as an official hack. Genius requires no preparatory training; at one bound Mr. Disraeli had

become the leader of a great party; at one bound he had become a cabinet minister

It would be absurd to say that the appointment of the new chancellor of the exchequer gave universal satisfaction. Mr. Disraeli was, so far as office was concerned, an untried man; he had never made finance his special study; he was brilliant and held original theories on many subjects, and therefore in the eyes of sober business men he was considered dangerous. Most people thought the appointment unwise, whilst many looked upon it as the wildest and most reckless act that Lord Derby could have committed. "He is a good orator," they cried, alluding to Mr. Disraeli, "a splendid debater, a perfect strategist, and a consummate master, when he chooses, of the art of saying something which means nothing. He created the Protectionists a party, and he therefore should be rewarded by office; but if there be one post in the administration which he should *not* occupy, it is that of chancellor of the exchequer." "It seems," wrote the *Morning Chronicle*—then a liberal organ of some note—(February 24, 1852), "that Lord Derby has had the incredible rashness to make Mr. Disraeli chancellor of the exchequer. Surely it might have been possible to find some less delicate system of machinery than the finances of the country as a subject for such an experiment." "It is a *mauvaise plaisanterie*," said the *Examiner* (February 28), "a plagiarism from *Punch*, a copy of a squib on an abortive attempt last year. The names, with an exception here and there, cannot be read in any society without a laugh; and yet, in reality, it is no laughing matter. For a serious affair there certainly was never anything so comical." Even the *Morning Post*, the journal of the party, was obliged to own that the appointment of Mr. Disraeli came upon the country with surprise. "It cannot be doubted," it wrote, "that such an arrangement was among the least expected of any which it has been our duty to announce." The leading newspaper was more complimentary,

but equally guarded in its comments upon the appointment.* "No one can doubt," said the *Times* (February 24), "that Mr. Disraeli is the man to lead the House of Commons; but he certainly has consulted rather his ambition than his genius in his selection of office. It is very true that he has dived into the depths and flown to the heights of financial theory; but the chancellor of the exchequer has not merely to make profits or elucidate maxims of finance. He has also to learn and comprehend the numerous relations between the commerce and the revenue of the country, to make elaborate financial expositions, and to be prepared with replies on any complicated question of details which convenience or even malice may suggest. In preparing for such tasks Mr. Disraeli will at least work against the grain, and he will possibly find it difficult to be both a wit and a chancellor of the exchequer."

As soon as his appointment had been made out, Mr. Disraeli proceeded to issue his address. He saw that, in the present feeling of the country, to return to the principles of Protection where the necessities of life were concerned was impossible, and therefore, unlike several of his colleagues, he expressed his views as to the future with great caution. As an individual he still maintained his opinions as to free trade, but as a minister it might be necessary for him to change or modify his policy. Trade was brisk; but he believed it was more due to the recent discoveries in the gold fields than to free trade. He saw, as he had predicted, that the farmer was suffering terribly, the sugar interest was crushed, and the shipping trade, from the repeal of the navigation laws, was sorely depressed. He, therefore, resolved

* It has been said that Mr. Disraeli was first appointed to the home office; but that as home secretary it would be his duty to wait in his turn upon the queen, and as Her Majesty at that time had no wish to admit him to this familiarity, the original intention of Lord Derby was not carried out. Upon what authority this statement has been made we know not. The advice given by Sir Robert Walpole as to the study of history may be equally applied to the mass of hostile criticism upon the earlier part of Mr. Disraeli's career—"Do not read it, it is full of lies."

since Protection could not be restored, to do all in his power to give compensation to the three interests which were specially affected by the recent efforts of the legislature. Still, in the address he now issued to his constituents, he expressed himself with much reserve, and indulged only in generalities as to the future policy he should advise. He stated that the queen had been pleased to call him to her privy council and had appointed him chancellor of the exchequer. Therefore, "according to the salutary principle of the constitution,"† he resigned into the hands of his constituents his seat, feeling sure that he would be re-elected. Then he proceeded to the subject-matter of the address.

"The late administration," he said, "fell to pieces from internal dissension, and not from the assault of their opponents; and notwithstanding the obvious difficulties of our position, we have felt that to shrink from encountering them would be to leave the country without a government and Her Majesty without servants. Our first duty will be to provide for the ordinary and current exigencies of the public service; but at no distant period we hope, with the concurrence of the country, to establish a policy in conformity with the principles which in opposition we have felt it our duty to maintain.

"We shall endeavour to terminate that strife of classes which of late years has exercised so pernicious an influence over the welfare of this kingdom; to accomplish those remedial measures which great productive interests, suffering from unequal taxation, have a right to demand from a just government; to cultivate friendly

† By the Act for the Security of the Crown and Succession (6 Anne c. 7), it was enacted (1) that every person holding "any office or place of profit whatsoever under the crown," created since October 25, 1705, or in receipt of a pension during the pleasure of the crown, should be incapacitated from sitting in the House of Commons; and (2) that every member of the House of Commons who accepted any of the previously existing offices under the crown (except a higher commission in the army) should be obliged to vacate his seat, though still eligible for re-election. The Reform Act of 1867 (80 and 81, Vict. c. 102) dispenses with this necessity to seek re-election in the case of a minister who is removed from one office under the crown to another.

relations with all foreign powers and secure honourable peace; to uphold in their spirit, as well as in their form, our political institutions; and to increase the efficiency, as well as maintain the rights of our national and Protestant church.

"An administration formed with these objects, and favourable to progressive improvement in every department of the state, is one which we hope may obtain the support and command the confidence of the community, whose sympathies are the best foundation for a strong administration, while they are the best security for a mild government."

A few days afterwards (March 13), he went down into Buckinghamshire and presented himself for re-election. A Dr. Lee, who, during the earlier years of Mr. Disraeli's representation of the county, went through the farce of posing as a rival candidate without the slightest chance of success, put in his usual appearance, and was as usual speedily disposed of. The chancellor of the exchequer then stood up to address the vast audience that had assembled from all parts of the country to hear him. As soon as the cheers that greeted his presence had subsided, he began his speech. He opened by alluding to the old stories of his enemies—that he had started in life as a Radical, that he had voted for this and then for that, and that 'he could amuse an audience for hours and send them away only wondering what they had been hearing about.' He, however, should not stop to vindicate his career; if nothing could be said against him but what he had done and said twenty years ago, he thought it was some presumption that they had a right to suppose that in the interval he had said and done nothing that could be very easily impugned. Whatever were his indiscretions, they commenced in Buckinghamshire, and Buckinghamshire had permitted him to atone for them. In politics, as in everything else, a man was not the worse for having 'sown his wild oats.' He, however, now promised his audi-

ence, that if they would only listen to him on this occasion, they would not go away "wondering what they had been hearing about," for it would be from no fault of his if they took their departure without a definite idea of what the intentions of the government were.

Then he proceeded to lay before his hearers the programme of the cabinet, which, briefly summed up, signified that since the country generally was in favour of free trade, the ministry would endeavour to substitute compensation for protection. The corn laws had been repealed, without considering the burdens to which the agricultural interest was subject. The national debt had been increased to terminate slavery, and markets had been opened to slave-grown produce, in a manner which even free traders of great celebrity regarded as entirely unjustifiable towards the colonial interest. The navigation laws had been repealed, and British shipping had thus been forced into competition with the shipping of all the world, and the British seaman and the British shipowner had sustained losses of a very onerous and injurious character. "Gentlemen," said Mr. Disraeli, "it is our opinion that as much injustice in the years 1846 to 1849 was done to these three great interests, in which such an immense amount of capital is invested and on which the employment of so much labour depends, justice should be done them. We are not ashamed to say that this is our political creed—that justice should be done to all classes; and if that be true, you will agree with me that justice should be done to the British producer as well as to the British consumer. If we can show—which it is not difficult to do, because all acknowledge it—that there are great classes of producers in this country who are suffering because they are placed in an unequal competition, it is not only our policy as a party, it is our duty as English statesmen, to see that interest placed in its legitimate position."

He then entered into statistics, and

showed that land was improperly burdened to the extent of about £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 a year, or in other words to the extent of a shilling in the pound; whilst at the same time the cultivator of the soil was called upon to enter into unrestricted competition with the cultivators of the soil of all other countries. How could, he asked, the landed interest pay these heavy burdens—burdens which no other class in the community bore? He was in favour, like that great political economist Mr. M'Culloch, of a countervailing duty; and he pledged himself to secure for the agricultural interest ample and complete redress. As it now was, the people of England were eating a farmer every night for their supper. It was absurd to suppose that all the commercial prosperity of the present day had merely originated in their permitting free imports to this country to compete with their taxed exports at home. Unquestionably the moment they opened the ports of this country, a great expansion of their foreign trade had taken place. Every Protectionist predicted it, but at the same time they had also said that such expansion would be accompanied with considerable suffering, which would outweigh the interests at home. The stress upon the farmer was foretold, and unquestionably it had occurred.

He admitted with pleasure that the labouring population had not suffered, nay that their condition had even improved; still much of such improvement was due not to free trade, but to the absence of Irish competition caused by "that fatal emigration which has reduced the population of the sister isle by millions." He also owned that the country had not suffered, what they all had predicted it would suffer, from the drain of gold in consequence of free imports. And why? Because the gold mining operations had been so successful that "last year the gold that came from America went through the bank like a sieve." He then concluded by saying that the cabinet had no objection to dissolve

parliament if the country earnestly wished it, but that they would not have the question pressed upon them by their opponents. "Confident myself," he said, "that in taking office we have at least resolved to do our utmost for the advantage of the country, I shall feel that the consciousness of that duty will sustain us under trying exigencies. And, gentlemen, I may say that as the noble lord who is at the head of the administration took Providence to witness in the senate of his country that he was influenced by no personal feeling in occupying the post of danger which he now fills, I will also express my hope that, whatever may be the fate of the government, when we leave office there will at least be among all temperate and impartial men a sense that, however humble may have been our efforts, we have endeavoured to do our duty to our country, our sovereign, and our God."

The House of Commons met, after its brief adjournment, March 12, 1852. The chancellor of the exchequer had scarcely taken his seat upon the Treasury bench before Mr. Villiers, of corn-law fame, rose up to catechise the government as to their future policy. On the accession of a Conservative cabinet to power much alarm was felt by a certain section of the country. It was feared that legislation would retrace its steps, and that Protection would oust free trade from the markets. Lord Derby, on the first resignation of the Russell ministry, had openly avowed his intention, should he ever undertake the task of forming an administration, of returning to the principles of Protection. Several of his colleagues in their election addresses had expressed themselves as hostile to the repeal of the corn laws, and had spoken with no uncertain voice as to the course they should recommend for the relief of the landed interest. The Opposition was alarmed. Anti-corn law meetings were held all over the country to combat the supposed retrogressive policy of the Tory party; a coalition had been effected between

the Whigs and the Peelites on the basis of supporting free trade; and since the new government were in favour of Protection, and the present parliament had been returned ostensibly to pass free-trade measures, every effort was to be made to force the Derby cabinet to dissolve the Houses and appeal to the country. It was the confident opinion of the Whigs and the Peelites that a general election would place the Tories in a most palpable minority.

Mr. Villiers embodied the current gossip of the clubs and the journals in the questions he put to the leader of the House of Commons. He wished, he said, to come to a clear understanding with respect to the intentions of Her Majesty's ministers. What was the principle or the policy on which the government proposed to regulate the foreign commerce of the country, and more especially that branch of it which was engaged in the supply of food for the people? A Protectionist party was in possession of the government; what was that Protectionist government going to do for the cause of Protection? In what manner was the chancellor of the exchequer about to establish that policy with which he had been identified in opposition? Was the tenant farmer to have the 5s. fixed duty which had been promised him at the hustings—a duty by which the farmer would get only 2s. on a quarter of wheat, whilst it would enable the landlord to come down upon him and say, "I have got you back Protection; you must now return me the ten per cent. I abated off your rent." Was this to be? He begged the chancellor of the exchequer to come forward and make an open avowal of the intentions of the government on the subject of their policy with respect to the foreign commerce of the country. The nation wanted no change of policy; it wanted no dissolution, no disturbance or struggle of any kind. All it wanted was to be allowed to remain in its present peaceful and prosperous condition, and for that nothing was required but a declaration on the part of the cabinet

that it had no intention to disturb the policy of free trade.

Thus solemnly adjured, Mr. Disraeli rose up to reply. He begged to assure the House, in spite of the superior information of Mr. Villiers, who not only knew that corn was to be taxed, but the exact amount of the tax, and the exact benefit that would arise from the impost, that the government had no intention of introducing any scheme of commercial or fiscal legislation before the dissolution of parliament, in order that the principle of Protection might be submitted to the deliberate judgment of the electors. Ministers intended to do nothing of the kind. They considered that a very great injustice had been done to the agricultural and other interests by the change which had taken place in 1846, and subsequently in 1847, 1848, and 1849, and consequently they were extremely desirous, for the benefit of all classes of the community, that that injustice should be redressed. It would, therefore, be their duty to consider the condition of the agricultural interest, and to propose such measures as were best calculated to remove the grievances under which it laboured. Ministers were, however, not pledged to any specific measure; they reserved to themselves the right of adopting what expedient they considered the most efficacious for the object they had in view. Other matters beside the agricultural interest would also engage their attention. They intended to bring before the House the question of chancery reform, the disfranchisement of St. Albans, and the distribution of the forfeited seats, and measures for the internal defence of the country. He was not bound, said Mr. Disraeli, to have answered the queries of Mr. Villiers with such frankness, and he hoped that gentleman would be satisfied with the course the government intended to pursue.

Then he proceeded to turn the tables upon his assailants. As the Opposition had very candidly inquired what were the principles on which the present administration was formed, he, on behalf of the

ministry, would likewise ask what were the principles on which the Opposition was formed. The Opposition had recently been reconstructed ; it was now composed not only of its original Whig element, but the Peelites, led by Sir James Graham, had joined it ; and acting with it were also the Free-traders led by Mr. Cobden. On what principle was the new Opposition founded ? Was it the principle of Papal supremacy, or of Protestant ascendancy ? Was it the principle of household suffrage, or of electoral groups ? Was it the principle of Mr. Cobden, that free trade was the panacea for all the evils of states, or was it a principle framed in deference to the sentiments of Lord John Russell, that free trade was a great exaggeration ? He thought these questions should be as frankly answered as the questions which had been pressed upon the government. He knew the difficulties before him, but he did not despair of baffling the manœuvres of faction. Then he took his seat.

A keen debate ensued. Lord John Russell complained that the ministers, being in a minority, did not express their intention of dissolving parliament and appealing to the country. Mr. Herries proved, from statistics in his hand, that the repeal of the navigation laws had been injurious to British shipping. Sir James Graham refuted the figures of Mr. Herries, and declared that, according to the constitutional precedents of Mr. Pitt in 1784, of Earl Grey in 1831, and of Lord John Russell in 1841, the government being in a minority, should speedily dissolve, and not attempt to carry through the present parliament the measures they proposed.*

* " Since the establishment of parliamentary government," writes Earl Grey, " the ordinary description of the British constitution, as one in which the executive power belongs exclusively to the crown, while the power of legislation is vested jointly in the sovereign and the two Houses of Parliament, has ceased to be correct, unless it be understood in a legal and technical sense. It is the distinguishing feature of parliamentary government that it requires the powers belonging to the crown to be exercised through ministers, who are held responsible for the manner in which they are used, who are expected to be members of the two Houses of Parliament, the proceedings of which they must be able generally to guide, and who are considered entitled to hold their offices

Most of the more prominent members on both sides of the House took part in the debate. The result of the discussion was, from the Conservative point of view, that the government did not intend to reverse a free-trade policy, but that they thought that that policy should be so altered and modified as not to press urgently upon one class while benefiting another. The Opposition was, however, dissatisfied with the various statements, which, it said, had elucidated nothing. Sir Alexander Cockburn summed up the sentiments of his party in a few words. " What was the meaning of the government ? " he asked. " Did the modification of the right hon. gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer mean the imposition of duties and taxes upon the food of the people ? It was essential that the people should understand that there was a policy by which the government meant to stand or fall, or whether they merely proposed to stand the chance of the next election on the principle of " Heads I win : tails you lose."

A few evenings (March 19) after the debate, the question was put point-blank by Lord John Russell to Mr. Disraeli,

only while they possess the confidence of parliament, and more especially of the House of Commons." Constitutional etiquette, however, demands that, on ministers coming into office, no factious opposition should be directed against them until after proof of gross incapacity. On the resignation of the Russell cabinet, Lord John had openly declared that a dissolution of parliament was not expedient ; and yet, within a fortnight of having made that statement, he was badgering Mr. Disraeli because he did not dissolve ! The cases alluded to by Sir James Graham are these : — In 1784 Mr. Pitt, being in a parliamentary minority, said, " Only give me permission to pass the Mutiny Bill, and the House shall be dissolved forthwith." In 1831 Lord Grey was beaten upon the Reform Bill by George Gascoigne, and he at once tendered his resignation, unless the king were pleased to dissolve the parliament. In 1841 the Russell government was defeated on the vote of want of confidence carried by Sir Robert Peel. Sir Robert, therefore, recommended Lord John to dissolve parliament with the least possible delay, and call a new parliament together immediately. These cases were, however, not parallel to the present situation. In 1831 and 1841 the ministers were beaten in parliament by a House of Commons of their own convening. The Derby government was called to power in a House of Commons assembled by the late government, and only brought into power because the late government acknowledged themselves unable to carry on the affairs of the country. The Conservatives, therefore, thought they should be neglecting their duty if they did not try to carry on the business of the government until the sense of the country could be taken upon certain grave questions.

whether the ministry, being in an acknowledged minority, "are prepared to advise the crown to dissolve the present parliament and to summon a new one with the least possible delay consistent with a due regard to the public interest in reference to those measures which are of urgent and immediate importance?" The chancellor of the exchequer at once rose and stated that Lord John had addressed an unprecedented question to Her Majesty's government. "I shall, however," said Mr. Disraeli, "reply to the noble lord. I think it is highly unconstitutional and most impolitic that Her Majesty's government should pledge themselves to advise Her Majesty to dissolve parliament at a stated and specific period. The noble lord must feel that circumstances might suddenly arise which would render the fulfilment of such a pledge not only injurious, but perhaps even impracticable. At the same time I have no hesitation in saying that it is the intention of Her Majesty's government to advise Her Majesty to dissolve this parliament so soon as those necessary measures have been passed—I should rather say, so soon as those measures have been passed which are necessary for the service of Her Majesty and the security and good government of her realm. I need only say further, that it is our wish and our intention to meet the new parliament that will be elected, so that the decision of the new parliament may be taken upon the question of confidence in the present administration, and upon the measures which they will find it their duty, under those circumstances, to propose in the course of the present year."

Shortly after this announcement the question of reform again came before the House, and the chancellor of the exchequer, as was his custom whenever the elective franchise was discussed, made a long speech. The irrepressible Mr. Hume had requested leave to bring in a bill to amend the national representation by extending the elective franchise so that every man of full age who had been the resident occupier

of a house or part of a house, as a lodger, for a year, and had been duly rated, should be registered as an elector, and be entitled to vote for a representative in parliament. At the same time he proposed the ballot, triennial parliaments, and that the proportion of representatives should be made more consistent with the amount of population and property. Mr. Disraeli began by criticising the last proposition of Mr. Hume, since it was, he said, the most interesting. He denied the truth of that very common but very inaccurate statement, that the proportion of representatives *was* unfairly arranged in favour of territorial influence. It was said that the proportion of representatives was so arranged by the present system that the town populations were not fairly represented in the English constitution and in the House of Commons. Such an assertion was untrue. He would deal with facts. Take North Cheshire for example. In North Cheshire they had only two towns, and both of great manufacturing importance—Macclesfield and Stockport. The total population of the county was 249,000; the total population of the two towns he had just named was 93,000. There remained, therefore, as the difference between the two, 156,000 for the numbers of the country population. But while the two towns, with a population of 93,000, returned four members to parliament, the rural constituency, with a population of 156,000, returned no more than two members. Take again the case of South Cheshire, in which there was only one town of note, that of Chester. The population of the county was 206,000, and the population of the town of Chester 28,000, leaving 178,000 of the population of that county who were not represented, except by the county members. The town of Chester, with its population of 28,000, returned two members, while the county constituency of 178,000 returned only the same number. He would instance other great manufacturing counties. He would take the case of South Derbyshire, where there was only one considerable

Town. The population of South Derbyshire was 166,000, and that of the town of Derby little exceeded 40,000, leaving 125,000 of rural population. That population of 40,000 returned two members, and the rural population of 125,000 returned only the same number. Take North Durham. That district of the county contained the important towns of Durham, Gateshead, South Shields, and Sunderland. The entire population of North Durham was 272,000, including both the town population and the county population; and it presented this interesting fact, that while the population of the towns was in amount exactly the same as the county population, yet the 136,000 of the great commercial and manufacturing towns he had named were represented by six members, while the county population of 136,000—the other moiety of North Durham—were only represented by two members. He might still pursue the subject. Take the important county of Kent. West Kent had a population of 400,000. It contained four great towns—Chatham, Greenwich, Maidstone, and Rochester, one of those towns having a population of 100,000. The population of the towns was 169,000, and the remaining rural population was 228,000; yet the urban population of 169,000 returned seven members to parliament, while the 228,000 only returned the two members for West Kent. And examination into the cases of North and South Lancashire, East Norfolk, and the East and West Riding, presented similar results.

"Year after year," said Mr. Disraeli, "we have been told of the monstrous injustice of the distribution of the present electoral system—that our representative system is favourable to territorial influences, and that artificial means have been devised of giving preponderance to the landed interest. But we never heard a single word of the remarkable circumstances which I have just adduced. We have been furnished with many striking contrasts between the number of representatives returned by the great

manufacturing towns in South Lancashire, and by the smaller boroughs in the south of England; but no parliamentary reformer has yet condescended to favour the House with the results of a more extended research, which would at least have allowed us to bring to the discussion of this subject more extensive views, and perhaps a more temperate spirit."

Having examined the subject so far, continued Mr. Disraeli, he must confess he had arrived at a different conclusion from that of Mr. Hume. He thought that his statistics, and the statistics of his school, were founded upon partial instances, and supported by fantastic combinations, which were calculated to convey to the country erroneous impressions—impressions not at all justified even by that gentleman's own data. All the data upon which Mr. Hume had relied appeared to him illusory; and as the facts to which he, the chancellor of the exchequer, had appealed were open to all, and might be found in the books in the library of that House, and in other equally accessible and authentic documents, he should be surprised indeed to find Mr. Hume maintaining his position, that in the distribution of the representation the town population, as contradistinguished from and compared with that of the country, had not been fairly and justly treated in the present electoral system. It appeared to him that that was a position that could no longer be supported.

With regard to the proposals of triennial parliaments and vote by ballot, proceeded Mr. Disraeli, he would state what he had always said—he did not object to them, but he saw no necessity to adopt them. It would be a change, and a change, unless for the better, was seldom a wise proceeding. Nor did he see how the ballot could be established. If they had the ballot with a limited constituency, they committed a greater injustice upon the unenfranchised classes; and if they had universal suffrage, they came to a new constitution—"a constitution," cried Mr.

Disraeli, "commonly called the Sovereignty of the People; you came to that constitution, in short, so much spoken of, so often panegyrized by the reforming and liberal members of this House—the constitution of America. But the sovereignty of the people is not the constitution of England; for wisely modified as that monarchy may be, the constitution of England is the sovereignty of Queen Victoria."

But it had been alleged that vote by ballot would put an end to all bribery and corruption. Was that so? He had papers in his hand touching elections in the United States, where the ballot was in all its glory. Yet those papers stated that so alarming was the increase of bribery that had taken place in the elections for the state of New York, that it demanded the serious attention of the legislature. This was the way he read how persons were treated at the last election in that pattern America, and under the beneficial influence of the ballot:—"Individuals were not merely beaten from the polls, but they were knocked down, beaten, and stabbed when proceeding about their ordinary occupations in open day, in distant parts of the city. The police appeared to have been utterly inefficient, and the 100,000 citizen soldiers, of whom the New York papers boasted so much, were content to remain at home while a few gangs of ruffians commanded all the approaches to the polling-booths, and in one instance destroyed the ballot-box." It was idle to suppose that open voting or vote by ballot could check corruption; it was a question of morality, not of political discipline. "I believe," said Mr. Disraeli, "it is a growing conviction among Englishmen that corruption is the consequence, not of one form of voting or of another, but of men being properly or improperly brought up. You may pass laws ostensibly to prevent corruption in countries where voting is secret, as well as in countries where voting is open; but corruption cannot be stopped by acts of parliament; it can only be stopped by elevating the tone

of the community, and making men ashamed of the thing itself. You must seek for an antidote to corruption in that direction, and not in the newfangled systems of election. I say, further, that the tone of the community in which we live has become more elevated in this respect. Every successive quarter of a century shows an improvement. No man who knows anything of the tone of public life a hundred years ago, can hesitate to admit that corruption then ascended much higher in society than it does at present. You have driven corruption from the higher classes. In proportion as education and opinion extended among the gentry, men became purer; and when the same influences come into equal operation among the humbler classes, it will be recognized that it is for the interest of all classes that bribery should disappear."

In conclusion, he dealt with an assertion which Mr. Bright and the rest of the Manchester school were constantly in the habit of making—an assertion out of which they derived considerable capital when addressing the ignorant portion of their constituents. "Is the system to be endured," cried the Manchester politicians, "in which only one in seven of the adult population of this country enjoys the franchise?" Mr. Disraeli then entered into statistics compiled from the census of 1841 and the electoral return of 1842–43, clearly proving that instead of one in seven of the adult population enjoying the franchise, it was, as a matter of fact, nearly one in *three!* "What a difference," he laughed, "from the statements made at Manchester and at Leeds! From those of reform associations at Liverpool or anywhere else! What a difference from the statements made in pamphlets! What a difference from the statements of those erratic orators who, during the recess, have astonished the world! Why, instead of one in seven, it is absolutely little more than half what you say, even including 1,500,000 of labourers, whom not one of you have unequivocally proposed to enfranchise."

Mr. Disraeli therefore considered the

propositions now before the House crude, false, and based on grave statistical errors. Neither he nor his party was opposed to reform. The Conservatives did not consider an extension of the franchise as synonymous with the extension of democratic power. It did not follow, because they refused to listen to propositions of the kind now before them, that they as a party were opposed to all reform. No; the contrary was the fact. "But I will tell the hon. gentleman," said Mr. Disraeli, looking at Mr. Hume, "what we are opposed to—we are adverse to all crude and unnecessary proposals founded on such erroneous calculations as the present. I tell him that if any project on this or any other subject is brought forward, I hope it will be founded on more accurate data than the one before us. What we are opposed to is tampering with the depositary of political power—to constant shifting and changing of the depositary of political power—as the most injurious thing to a country that can be conceived. You may talk of tampering with the currency, and there are few things worse; but that which is worse is, tampering with the constituency of England. If there is to be a change, let it be a change called for by pure necessity, and one which is calculated to give general—I will not say final—but general and permanent satisfaction. I ask, is the proposition of the hon. member for Montrose—the whole foundation of which I have shown to be utterly fallacious—is that a proposition calculated to give general and permanent satisfaction? . . . We cannot sanction the proposition of the hon. gentleman or his friends. And may we not flatter ourselves that after the debate of this night, he will reconsider these things—that he will investigate them—that he will calmly consider the important information from the other side of the Atlantic which I have given him—and that next year, with a health, spirit, and energy which I hope he will long enjoy, we may find him coming forward more temperate

in his views, and more careful in his statements? Till we have propositions of a different character brought forward, I shall stand by the settlement made in 1832; not because it was a settlement made for our party interests—for, on the contrary, it was levelled against those supposed interests; but the good sense of the country has exercised a remedial influence over the devices of rival factions, and under that settlement of 1832 the country has on the whole, in my opinion, been well governed. At any rate, it is not what is styled the Liberal party which should dispute that position. There is not a great question, which during the last twenty years has enlisted a preponderating amount of popular sympathy out of doors, which this House has not adopted and carried; and though I may think that in more than one instance great subjects have thus been dealt with in an unwise and precipitate spirit, that should be no cause of censure with hon. gentlemen opposite. Until, therefore, they can succeed in showing that this country has of late years been generally misgoverned—and that would be a condemnation of their whole course—and until they are prepared to substitute for the existing House of Commons a far more clear and coherent scheme than any they have yet offered, I must uphold an arrangement, which, though conceived in no friendly spirit to the Tory party, is one which has not proved hostile to the national institutions—stitutions which, I believe, to be necessary not only to the greatness of the country, but to the freedom of the people." These arguments, which Lord John Russell admitted had been gone through with "very great ability," carried the day. On the House dividing, the motion of Mr. Hume was rejected by a majority of 155.

The government were to score a still greater victory. The change of a Russell cabinet into a Derby cabinet had made no difference in the feeling of the nation as to the imperfect state of the internal defences of the country. With France it was true

we were then at peace; but every day events proved that Louis Napoleon was not only a bold man, but an unscrupulous man, who would not hesitate to resort to the wildest proceedings if by them he pandered to the vanity of his new subjects, or could render his tenure of power more secure. In the clubs, in drawing rooms, on provincial exchanges, the one subject upon which all men agreed was the possibility of England being invaded by a foreign enemy, and that enemy our old foe, who was burning to revenge Waterloo. It was said that within twenty miles of our coast were 500,000 soldiers, who, thanks to the application of steam to the purposes of marine, could effect a speedy landing upon our shores. Even the first Napoleon, it was nervously argued, wanted but the command of the channel for a brief twenty-four hours, to see his 60,000 men, then under canvas at Boulogne, marching through Sussex and Kent straight upon London; and now, through the agencies of the screw and the paddle, but a fifth of that time would be sufficient to see the blue coats and red trousers of the French soldiery in our midst. "Only conceive," cried Mr. Roebuck, then preparing for his part as the dog "Tear 'em," "only conceive what would be the consequence, not merely to England, but to mankind at large, of the occupation of London but for twelve hours by an invading force. Don't tell me this is not likely to happen. Let me call to your recollection that London is the only capital in Europe in which French armies have not planted themselves. Those armies have roamed through Europe, checked only first by frost, and secondly by England; and let the House be well assured that France has not forgotten this latter check, but is, on the contrary, now more than ever eager to have her revenge. Yes! there is danger, and great danger, ay, and immediate danger; and speaking not as an individual, but as a man interested in the destinies of humanity, as a friend of the people, I call upon the parliament to strengthen

England, not for the purpose of aggressive warfare, but of national defence."

In this appeal Mr. Roebuck rightly felt the pulse of the country. Every one—save the cheese-parers and the abject traders who had studied pusillanimity as a virtue behind the counters of Manchester—was in favour of the maxim, "If you wish for peace, prepare for war." It was all very well to talk of the spirit of England; but of what avail would such spirit be against a disciplined and aggressive foe? "Unorganized, undisciplined, without systematic subordination established and well understood," said the Duke of Wellington, "this spirit opposed to the fire of musketry and cannon, and to sabres and bayonets of disciplined troops, would only expose those animated by such spirit to confusion and destruction." What was wanted was a practised and capable force to be held in reserve in case of emergency. The Whigs had brought in a bill to amend the laws relating to the local militia, which political reverses had now caused them to abandon; the Tories would therefore be greatly to blame if, on an occasion like the present, they were to ignore the defenceless condition of the country. Accordingly towards the end of March Mr. Walpole was intrusted with the task of carrying through the House of Commons a bill to "amend and consolidate the laws respecting the militia."

The speech in which he introduced his measure was temperate and practical. He did not think, he said, that the country was menaced with any actual and immediate danger; but, looking to the elements of anarchy and confusion in Europe, it was certainly necessary that England ought in her means of defence at least, whatever might be her means of attack, to be placed on an equal footing with other nations. Were they, or were they not, in such a state of defence as the inhabitants of a great country like theirs ought to be? The answer was not a difficult one. They had, it was true, a large army; but that army was not a quarter of

the army of Russia, not half the army of Prussia, not a third of the army of France, and very little more than the army of Belgium ; and yet they had to defend an empire comprising one-sixth of the population and one-eighth of the surface of the habitable globe. Their troops were consequently scattered over the whole world. In case of sudden invasion or incursion, what was the force which they could bring to bear upon the south coast of England ? He replied that, even by leaving the rest of the country deprived of military force, they could not bring to bear upon any one point 25,000 men. He did not forget the navy. It was said that they had ships enough to cover the whole of the south coast ; but if that were true, had they men enough to man them ? and if they had ships enough, would the House vote the money to enable the government to put them in commission ? Besides, in a case of invasion a fleet was rarely serviceable unless aided by a covering force by land. He proposed, therefore, to have recourse to their national militia ; it was a force familiar to the country, it had done good service in the past, and from it they could recruit the regular army. The objects of the measure he now brought before the House were to create an additional force of 80,000 men, to be permanently established for the defence of the kingdom. This force was to be raised by means of bounties—say £3 or £4—and the period of training and drilling was to be twenty-one days, with a power to the Crown to extend such period, in cases of necessity, to fifty-six days.

So little was this militia bill a party act, that its provisions were more or less cordially approved of by the leading members on both sides of the House. There was, however, one conspicuous exception. In all matters not connected with the development of commerce Mr. Cobden held the short-sighted views of the culpably thrifty and mean-spirited tradesman. Every proceeding that tended to keep the shop open and fill it with

wares, he warmly approved of ; but no sooner was it a question of expending anything upon the purchase of iron shutters, or upon the increase of the patrol for the better protection of the warehouse, than he became acrid and miserly, noisily asserting that there were no thieves about, nor any probability of a riot. On this occasion of the militia bill he was very true to the teaching of his contemptible philosophy. He did not believe in the possibility of England being invaded ; and if she were, of what use, he asked, would such a force be as the militia ? "I can't treat the thing as serious," he cried ; "it just seems to me to be this, that somebody wants to create soldiers ; that lords-lieutenant want patronage and fuss ; that somebody else seeks amusement with red coats ; and I do not believe that anybody in this country seriously entertains the fear of an invasion by France." The French, he continued, were a commercial people, second only to ourselves as a manufacturing nation, and they had something far better to do than to make a raid upon England. Instead of increasing our army, we ought to reduce it. He was satisfied with the defences of the nation ; why, therefore, was he to be taxed in order that the militia should be increased ? It was absurd to say that the country was in danger ; he did not care for the opinions of naval and military officers and such people ; the Marylebone vestry had declared that the country was not in danger, and that was sufficient for him. [What would Mr. Cobden have thought if the English farmer had argued in some such fashion : He, Bill Hodges, was quite satisfied with the duty on corn, why should he be harshly taxed in order that the corn laws should be repealed ? He did not care for the opinions of economists, leaguers, and such folk ; the farmers' ordinary at the " Magpie and Stump " had declared that the corn laws were necessary for the landed interest, and that was sufficient for him !] It was the custom of the Treasury bench, said Mr.

Cobden, allowing his miserable economy to get the better of his common sense, to chatter about the paucity of the services, yet the truth was they had more men in them than were required. Bring the troops home from the colonies, he suggested, and disband them; order the ships home from their stations and burn them to the water's edge, provided France would do the same; then taxation could be reduced, then the country could be happy, prosperous, and contented. He saw no reason for this increase of their armaments; and as he considered the bill a wanton act, he should oppose the measure at every stage. Mr. Bright, of course, followed suit. Comic satire has represented Mr. Bright as a "roaring bull," making the welkin of vested interests ring with his deep-mouthed threatening tones. At this time of his political career, however, his roar was little more than the echo of the eloquence of the great apostle of free-trade; indeed, Mr. Bright so admired Mr. Cobden as scarcely to be capable of expressing an independent opinion;* satire would therefore have been more true to its art if it had described the then representative of Manchester as a spaniel instead of as a member of the bovine herd.

Mr. Disraeli made a short speech upon the first reading of the bill, and then more in refutation of Mr. Cobden's unpatriotic arguments than in support of the measure itself. He would not attempt, he said sarcastically, to answer Mr. Cobden, who had made one of those agreeable speeches which he always listened to with pleasure. Mr. Cobden was not merely against the militia, but against all defence—against the line, the household troops, the artillery, and the cavalry; and his arguments proceeded on the assumption that in the present state of the world no country need defend itself. The chancellor of the exchequer could not give his adhesion to

those opinions. There were features in the present political arrangements of the world which forbade him to believe that the reign of peace was to be ushered in. So long as he found the strongest places in the possession of the weakest powers, so long as he observed that throughout Europe and Asia the richest countries were under the dominion of the poorest sovereigns, he felt that that was a state of things which would lead no doubt hereafter, he hoped not in his own time, to very great changes which could not, he believed, be effected by any other agency than war. It was the duty, therefore, of a country like England to be prepared for any emergency that might arise.

The craven counsels of Mr. Cobden and his school did not bear much fruit. On the second reading of the bill the House divided—ayes, 315; noes, 165; majority, 150. The royal assent was given to the bill June 30, 1852.

During the first weeks of his tenure of office Mr. Disraeli was deeply immersed in business. In addition to the heavy work involved in the preparation of his first financial statement before a keenly critical audience, scarcely a night passed without him being called upon to make some reply, which partook more or less of the nature of a speech. Now it was upon a question of supply, then upon some railway extension, then upon the hop duty, or the import duties upon wine, or the paper duty, or the Frome Vicarage case, or the corrupt practices at elections, or he had to explain the clauses contained in a private bill which the government either opposed or supported. Silence and repose were denied him. He had hoped that the defeat of Mr. Hume would have restrained the activity of the Reformers, and that they would have been content to leave the bill of 1832 alone until they were more united as to the amendments they proposed to effect. He was soon undeceived. Only a few days after the rejection of Mr. Hume's motion, Mr. Locke-King came forward to do battle,

* It is true that Mr. Bright called the Derby cabinet a "confederated imposture," but, as Mr. Disraeli had some years before stigmatized the government of Sir Robert Peel as an "organized hypocrisy," the originality of the remark is perhaps open to dispute.

ever-faithful to his old love, the county franchise. He begged leave, April 27, 1852, to bring in a bill to make the franchise, and procedure at elections in England and Wales, the same as in the boroughs, by giving the right of voting to all occupiers of tenements of the annual value of ten pounds; the time of taking the poll to be limited to one day, and the time of proceeding to election to be limited to eight days. It was the same bill as he had introduced the year before, with the addition as to polling places and the duration of elections, and among the chief supporters of the innovation were Mr. Hume and Mr. Bright.

The chancellor of the exchequer gave the motion his unqualified opposition. He objected to it because it was partial, and he also considered that the lax system, session after session, of tampering with the constitution, now of attempting to alter the constituencies of the towns and then of seeking to add to or adjust the constituencies of counties, was mischievous, and could only lead to conclusions which would be unsatisfactory. He had also another objection to the bill. He had often said, and it was the expression of a deep and sincere conviction on his part, that he thought in the construction of that memorable law, the Reform Act of 1832, there was a very great deficiency—which consisted in a want of *due consideration of the rights of the working classes to the franchise*. And if there were that great deficiency in their system of representation, he assuredly could not understand how that measure, or the other measures on the same subject which had been so frequently proposed, were at all to meet the deficiency. Under their old system, by the suffrages of the freemen, the political rights of the labourers were acknowledged by the constitution. They virtually destroyed those rights. He was aware, of course, that the rights of the then possessors were reserved. But the fountains which supplied that constituency were destroyed; and, in fact, they virtually ter-

minated the political rights of labour with the class of freemen they destroyed. *He traced much of the discontent in the country, which at times had been painfully felt, with regard to the Reform Act of 1832, to the omission to which he had adverted.* Yet, what had been the remedy which had been offered by those who arrogated to themselves the sole privilege of representing and championing the rights of the working classes? They came forward and proposed a large extension of the suffrage, virtually universal suffrage; their remedy was to throw the whole power of the country into the hands of a mere class. Instead of securing a constituency which gave to property all the rights of property, which gave to labour all the rights of labour, which cherished, in short, the existence of those various classes, the recognition, the legal and political recognition, of whose interests had, he believed, been one of the main causes of the flourishing condition of the country, and of the duration of its order—both social and political—they proposed, as a remedy, a measure which essentially was a measure of class legislation, because they proposed to give political authority to a class so numerous that it would overwhelm all other classes, and entirely change the constitution of the country. To such a change he was opposed, as hurtful to the condition and character of the nation.

Still, continued Mr. Disraeli, that was no reason why they might not consider whether an industrial franchise might not be invented which would give satisfaction to those who claimed to be represented in the legislation of the country. That was a question which deserved the grave consideration of any man responsible for the good government of the country. On the part of himself, and on the part of his colleagues—he had said it before, and he repeated it now, in order that their opinions might not be misunderstood—he stated that they did not necessarily associate an extension of the franchise with the

extension of democratic power. If he could see any measure brought forward—well matured, conceived, not in political passion, *but with a sincere desire of giving to deserving artisans the exercise of the suffrage in a manner* consistent with the maintenance of those institutions the preservation of which he believed were as much for the interest of those artisans as they were for the interests of any other class of the country—he would give, and so would those with whom he acted, to such a proposition a dispassionate and kind consideration. But the motion of Mr. Locke-King was not of that class; and until some measure was brought forward which, as he thought, met the difficulties of the case, he must take his stand upon the settlement which existed—not from any superstitious reverence for that settlement, but because he was opposed to year after year tampering with the constitution of the country—a tampering which he was convinced was the source of political weakness and of national debility.

Let no one suppose, said Mr. Disraeli, that there was, on the part of the present government, any bigoted adherence to the forms then existing. The present government had only one object, an object which he sincerely believed was that of all the members of the House, the good government of the country. But they desired to see the greatness of the realm maintained, and the prosperity of the people secured. And if a change in the franchise was only proposed as a mode of obtaining political power, and of exciting political agitation, to such proposal they must give their unconditional and uncompromising opposition. He had too much respect for Mr. Locke-King to describe his motion as a measure of that kind. But he must nevertheless describe it as essentially unsatisfactory, not calculated in any degree to meet the exigency of the state of affairs; one which he could easily understand, if successful, might lead to much disturbance and readjustment, but which at the same time could conduce to no permanent

or enduringly acceptable settlement; and therefore he must give to it—not because that was the last session of the existing parliament, but because he would take the same view under any circumstances—an unqualified opposition. On a division the motion was lost by a majority of fifty-three.

The chief attraction of the session was, however, Mr. Disraeli's financial statement. As the night approached for the details of the budget to be laid before the House, the excitement and curiosity became very marked. Every seat in the speaker's gallery had been engaged days before-hand; and on the afternoon of the debate the lobbies were crowded with persons appealing to members and corrupting door-keepers for admission into the strangers' gallery. The House was fuller than it had ever been since the famous Don Pacifico affair; for though it was known that the statement to be made was only a provisional statement, and the budget only a provisional budget, yet curiosity was very keen as to how the new chancellor of the exchequer would deal with his first financial exposition. During the last three years he had been almost the only member of his party who had openly abandoned the principle of protection; what course, then, it was asked, would he adopt which would satisfy the views of those who sat on his side of the House, and at the same time would recommend itself to the nation generally? How could he compensate the agricultural interest for their past sufferings? It was known that he disapproved of direct taxation; what would he substitute for it? As one opposed to the principles of free trade, what duties would he add, what remissions would he effect? Then, as is always the case when expectation is at its height, imagination and mendacity went hand in hand and filled the newspapers and the clubs with every fiction that rumour or gossip could devise. One journal had it, "on the very best authority," that Lord Derby had pledged himself to uphold the policy of Protection, and that the moment Mr.

Disraeli rose to address the House, some most startling disclosures would be made. Another declared, also "on the very best authority," that Mr. Herries was about to move for the restoration of the navigation laws. Liverpool and Manchester held mass meetings, vowing that they would move heaven and earth to turn out the government if the duty of a single farthing were placed on the importation of foreign corn. Tadpole, who was an income-tax commissioner, hovered nervous and worried between White's and the Carlton, wondering whether there was any truth in the report that the income tax was not to be renewed? Taper, who was drawing his £1200 a year in the inland revenue, had heard that the excise duties on soap and paper were about to be removed, and that his appointment was in danger. Then the men with their special interests, and the men with their special hobbies, wanted to know how they would be affected by the forthcoming budget. The farmers wanted to know whether the malt tax would be taken off; the economists wanted to know what exemptions were to be made to the principle of direct taxation; the manufacturers wanted to know what excise duties, which pressed so heavily upon their wares, were to be removed or reduced; Liverpool and Mincing Lane were anxious as to the duty on tea; the distillers hoped there would be a clause in the budget placing the dealers of home-made spirits in bond on a footing of equality with the dealers of foreign and colonial spirits, with regard to the loss by leakage and evaporation; whilst the military element made bets as to the cost of the Kaffir war. In short, there was not an individual or a calling which did not look forward to the day when curiosity would be satisfied, and timidity be set at rest from suspense.

At last the long anticipated moment arrived. The order of the day had been read for a committee of ways and means; Mr. Bernal had taken his seat in the chair; and then, amid encouraging applause

from both sides of the House, immediately followed by the stillest silence, Mr. Disraeli rose up (April 30, 1852) to lay before the country his financial statement. It was his habit in most of his carefully prepared speeches, not merely to adhere to dry facts, but whilst imparting a literary flavour to his matter, at the same time to give it an educational tone. On this occasion he began by sketching the history of the revenue, and the source from which it was raised. There were three modes, he said, of raising the revenue of this country—by duties upon articles of foreign import, by duties upon articles of domestic manufacture, and by a system of direct taxation. The income for the preceding year had exceeded the expenditure by some £2,000,000, but for the year to come the expiration of the income tax would leave a deficiency estimated at the same amount. The question, therefore, was, how was that deficiency of £2,000,000 to be supplied? He did not, in the present parliament, certainly think the prospect of making up that deficiency by an increase of the customs duties was very encouraging. For, during the last ten years—from 1842 to 1851—he found one very remarkable feature in the financial management of the country, and that was, that in every one of those years there had been a reduction of duties upon foreign articles imported into the country. They had reduced or repealed duties upon coffee, upon timber, upon wool, silk, spirits, and numerous other articles, until in the ten years mentioned they had struck off nearly £9,000,000 of calculated revenue from customs duties. That being the case, said Mr. Disraeli, it would be somewhat presumptuous on his part to suppose that he could induce the House to supply the deficiency by the imposition of fresh duties upon imports.

Was his prospect, then, more encouraging when he sought to meet the difficulty by having recourse to duties on articles of domestic manufacture? In

the great controversies upon commercial legislation which had been agitated of late, two opinions had been strenuously advocated in that House as to the preferable means by which the industry of the country might be relieved—the one advocating the repeal of customs duties, the other the remission or the repeal of excise duties. Between these two schools, what was he to do? As the calculated sources of revenue from the customs had been reduced, as he had just stated, by an amount of £9,000,000; so, during the last ten years, by various remissions of the excise duties, a sum of £1,500,000 had been lost on the excise. "If one side of this House," laughed Mr. Disraeli, "are of opinion that you must not supply a deficient revenue by customs duties, and the other side of the House are equally convinced that an excise duty is more injurious to the industry of a country than a duty on the import of foreign articles, what is the prospect of success for a chancellor of the exchequer, if his means of supplying a deficiency are limited to those two still important sources of our public revenue?"

There was, then, the alternative of applying to the third mode in which revenue could be raised—direct taxation. Yet, when he came to consider how hateful both to the House and the nation was the property and income tax, he felt that he had as little to expect from direct taxation as from indirect. What course was he to adopt; for, in questions of finance, the feelings of the people were to be considered as much as the principles of science? In theory, direct taxation was an easy, a simple, and a captivating process; but, when they came to apply it generally, it was astonishing the obstacles they encountered and the prejudices they created. In his opinion, if the principle of direct taxation was to be permanently established in the country, it should be as universal in its application as indirect taxation. "No doubt," said Mr. Disraeli, ever true to his

dislike of partial and class legislation, "by establishing a temporary measure of direct taxation based upon a large system of exemptions, you may give a great impulse to industry; you may lighten the springs of industry very effectually for a time; but—not to dwell upon the gross and glaring injustice of a system of finance that would tax directly a very limited portion of the population—but looking only to the economical and financial consequences of such a system, who cannot but feel that in the long run industry itself must suffer from such a process? For, after all, what is direct taxation founded on a system of exemptions? It is confiscation. It is making war upon the capital which ultimately must employ that very industry which you wish to relieve."

He then entered upon statistics most gratifying for his opponents to listen to. In spite of a vast remission of taxation the actual income of the year 1851–52 had exceeded the income estimated by Sir Charles Wood, the late chancellor of the exchequer, by more than £300,000. In spite of the reduction of the duties on sugar, coffee, and timber the customs had exceeded by some £200,000 the estimates formed by Sir Charles, whilst the consumption and importation of coffee, sugar, and timber had greatly increased. Throughout the whole of the estimates of the late chancellor of the exchequer there was the same pleasant difference between the actual receipts and the calculated receipts—the excise, the post office, stamps, and taxes, &c., all brought more money to the exchequer than had been anticipated. These statements certainly did not prove that free trade had been ruinous to the country, and they were vociferously cheered by the Opposition. It was not, however, every rival who would have had the courage or the generosity of Mr. Disraeli to bring such facts forward. At the same time we must remember that this financial prosperity was not entirely due to free trade; it was due

in no small measure to the levying of the income tax, to the gold discoveries in America and Australia, and to the impetus given to business by the Great Exhibition.

The chancellor of the exchequer then came to his own financial statement. For the estimated expenditure of the year 1852-53 he was scarcely responsible, since its estimate had been prepared by his predecessor in office, Sir Charles Wood. That expenditure he put at over £51,000,000, and he proposed to raise it from the usual sources of indirect taxation.* From the calculations he had made there would be, without the income tax, a deficit of over £2,000,000; he would, therefore, ask for a continuance of the duties on property and income for a limited period, which would leave him a surplus of some £500,000. Then, in conclusion, he expressed the views of the cabinet as to the principles upon which the public revenue should be raised. He looked with great apprehension upon the opinions prevalent in the House of Commons, which seemed opposed to all the great sources of raising the income of the country. He considered that nothing would be more injurious than rashly and rapidly to reduce the sources of indirect taxation, whilst they had come to no general conclusion as to the principles upon which direct taxation should be levied. He was of

* The estimated expenditure for the current year, ending in April, 1863, was £51,168,979, viz.:—

Debts and charges on Consolidated Fund,		£30,550,000
Army,	.	6,491,893
Navy (including Packet Service),	.	6,493,000
Ordnance,	.	2,437,000
Civil Estimates,	.	4,182,086
Caffre War,	.	660,000
Militia,	.	350,000
Total,	.	£51,168,979

The sources of supply were estimated as follows:—

Customs,	.	£20,572,000
Excise,	.	14,604,895
Stamps,	.	6,389,000
Taxes,	.	8,090,000
Property tax (half a year),	.	2,600,000
Post Office,	.	988,000
Woods,	.	235,000
Miscellaneous,	.	260,000
Old Stores,	.	400,000
Total income,	.	£49,088,895

opinion that, if the House continued in that mood of mind, it would be impossible to maintain the revenue of the country in the manner which the public credit and the wants of their national establishments required. It was absolutely necessary that the House of Commons should arrive at some definite understanding on what principle the revenue of the country should be raised. Nothing was more pernicious than the systematic reduction of indirect taxation that had been going on, whilst at the same time direct taxes were being levied from a very limited class. "Sir," said the chancellor of the exchequer, addressing the chairman, "we would not have shrunk from undertaking the laborious effort of examining the whole of our financial system, animated by these views and actuated by this purpose. But I put it with confidence to the committee whether it has been possible for us to undertake a duty which demands labour so patient, research so considerable, and an amount of time which no member of the government, I am sure, has yet been able to devote to it. The committee will, I am sure, recollect that it is only two months since Her Majesty's present government acceded unexpectedly to office, . . . and although the indulgence of the House, of which no person can be more sensible than myself, has assisted me in attempting to conduct the business of this House, still the claims of the House and of my department have, I can assure the committee, rendered it physically impossible for me to embark in such an undertaking."

Thus, practically, Mr. Disraeli's budget was framed upon the lines of the Liberal policy. He had no alternative. He disapproved of the income tax, yet he felt bound to impose it; he disapproved of the systematic reduction of indirect taxes, yet he had to submit to it; he found in the pigeon holes of the treasury a budget ready to his hand, and time had been wanting to manipulate it into a more Conservative measure. He had said nothing as to Protection, and throughout his speech, with a

manly candour which refuted many of his former protestations, he admitted that free trade had not caused the revenue of the country to decrease. Still, as we shall see from the budget he, towards the end of the year, laid before the country, and which was his own measure, and not, as it were, a compulsory adaptation of the scheme of a Liberal cabinet, he was loyal to the interests whose claims he had always advocated. "Disraeli has this evening," writes Lord Palmerston, "made a good financial statement. His speech of two hours was excellent, well arranged, clear, and well delivered, but it made out the complete success of the financial and commercial measures of the last ten years of the Peel and of the Whig administration. . . . He was vociferously cheered by Liberals and Peelites, but listened to in sullen silence by supporters of the government. . . . He has entirely thrown over the idea of import duty on corn—or in other words the principle of Protection." There is some exaggeration in this statement. In the first place, as we shall prove, he was not listened to in sullen silence by his own party, for his words were cordially approved of by those sitting on the Tory side of the House. Nor was his throwing over the principle of Protection an act of recent conversion, as Lord Palmerston's remarks would imply. During the last three years Mr. Disraeli had, as we have shown by his frequent utterances, maintained the impracticability of resorting to a duty on corn in a crowded island like our own, where the home-grown wheat was not in proportion to the demands of the population. He had abandoned the principle of Protection so far as the necessities of life were concerned, and instead of Protection he had substituted compensation: the interests that had specially suffered, he asserted, should be specially compensated. He was in favour, as he more than once declared in the House of Commons, of free trade, but not of "one-sided free trade."

The speech he delivered on this occa-

sion was undoubtedly a great success. Sir Charles Wood—and there was little love lost between the late chancellor of the exchequer and his successor in office—declared that he concurred not only in the course which Mr. Disraeli proposed, but in most of the observations addressed by that gentleman to the House. He considered that the financial statement of Mr. Disraeli had afforded the most ample testimony to the success of the Liberal commercial policy during the last ten years. "A more triumphant case," said Sir Charles, "I do not wish to see made out, than that which the right hon. gentleman has made for us to-night; and I trust that from his evidence—unsuspicious as it is—honourably and candidly as it has been given—the country will come to the conclusion that this is the proper policy that has been and ought to be pursued by past and future finance ministers in this country. . . . I feel that there is no necessity for me to make any statement on this occasion. I thank the right hon. gentleman for the bold manner in which he has spoken out on our financial condition. I am grateful to him for the kind manner in which he has expressed himself towards me personally. I thank him for the cordial estimate which he has formed of the success of our late policy; I take it as an augury that no change will be attempted to be made. I approve of the course which he intends to take for the ensuing year; and so far as depends upon me—and I trust I may add the House—every facility will be given him to pass his resolution with the least possible delay."

Mr. Hume was less generous and more critical. He agreed with Mr. Disraeli in denouncing all the exemptions allowed under the income-tax; yet he was much surprised that the measure, which had been branded by the chancellor of the exchequer as unjust, was to be continued. Still, as a free trader, he thanked Mr. Disraeli; for, if ever there was a speech which proved the truth of the principles of free trade, it was the speech of the hon. member for Bucks. It was highly

creditable to the right hon. gentleman, that he should have stated the truth in the way he had done. He hoped that Mr. Disraeli looked back with regret and remorse on his past career, and the manner in which Sir Robert Peel had been persecuted. Yet, he was not one of those who would now cast back those taunts upon the right hon. gentleman; on the contrary, he would give credit to any man who, finding that he had been in error, had the manliness to come forward and state his conviction. As to the future, he wished to see the income tax made equal, and all exemptions removed, and the people relieved from the burden of indirect taxation. But Mr. Disraeli had proposed to do nothing. The present budget was a stand-still budget; it did nothing but continue the present burdens upon the country. He was sorry to disturb the general unanimity of feeling by being the only person to express dissatisfaction; but he was dissatisfied, because he thought that the people had a right now to expect some relief from taxation.

Mr. Baring, who was a great authority in the House upon commercial matters, praised the prudence of the chancellor of the exchequer in framing a "stand-still budget," when he was not sure what might be the future expenditure of the country. The free traders had been very jubilant; but he considered that Mr. Disraeli had taken too bright a view of the result of the late commercial legislation. He considered that the financial prosperity of the country was due more to the imposition of the property and income tax than to the principles of free trade. Without that tax which, though imposed to meet a pressing emergency, was continued for other purposes, they would never have been without a deficiency at any one period, or have attained their present position. Nor did he see that, after all their reductions in the excise and customs duties, they could yet dispense with it. The Liberals declared that they had taken off £10,000,000 of taxes; but that was not the case, for the

income tax had extracted, during the last ten years, £4,500,000 yearly from the pockets of the nation; of course, with that impost always ready to hand, the Liberals could afford every now and then to give a little in the way of remission of taxes. "If you pick my pocket," said Mr. Baring, "of £5 a year, at the end of ten years you may make me a present of £10, and may give me £1 or £2 occasionally in the meanwhile, but let the debtor and creditor account be taken, and what would be the result? Let the House take into consideration what the country had paid in taxation by the property tax, and he should be very much surprised if it was not found that the increase of remission was not so great as had been supposed. He did not mean to say that they would not show an increase; but the remission of £10,000,000 had only taken place for a year, while the imposition of £5,000,000 dated ten years ago." He did not think the general prosperity of the country so great as had been supposed, whilst certain interests—the colonial, the shipping, and the agricultural—were in anything but a state of prosperity. He concluded by praising the chancellor of the exchequer, "who had a mind which could grapple with anything, nor did he fail to ornament, elucidate, and enforce whatever he grappled with. The House had that night had the exhibition of the greatest talent and genius applied to the practical concerns of the administration of the country."

From both sides of the House there was but one opinion as to the lucid and well-marshalled speech of the new chancellor of the exchequer. Mr. Gladstone congratulated Mr. Disraeli on his "very able statements," which he had laid before the country "in a manner highly honourable to him, and in a manner peculiarly his own." Mr. Bright "would say honestly that he participated most largely in the satisfaction generally expressed, not with the manner only, but with the matter of the right hon. gentleman's speech." Mr. Labouchere had

listened to it "with deep satisfaction," and rejoiced to see a man of such unquestioned talent filling so high a position. Mr. Muntz declared that "during the twelve years' that he had sat in parliament he had never heard anything more able or lucid." Equally complimentary, as was to be expected, were the remarks of those who sat on the Conservative side of the House. Sir John Tyrell, who represented Essex, denied that the Conservatives, as Mr. Hume had alleged, had listened with long, gloomy countenances to the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer. The statement of Mr. Disraeli was altogether a provisional statement, and the budget a provisional budget. The free traders were unnecessarily elated. It did not follow, because the finances of the country were in a satisfactory state, that the commerce and trade of the country were equally so. It could not be denied that trade was bad; still, a satisfactory statement from the chancellor of the exchequer was perfectly compatible with the existence of great distress in various parts of the country. After the next election controverted points would be settled. The Conservatives did not make war upon commerce, but on the unjust taxation of the country; and when they spoke of Protection, they referred to the redress of grievances. Mr. Alderman Thompson, who had sat in the House thirty-two years, declared that he had never heard a more clear financial statement. In spite of the taunting references from the Liberals to the free-trade tendencies of the chancellor of the exchequer, he understood that Mr. Disraeli preferred that the revenue should be raised by indirect taxation; and therefore he supposed the whole system of taxation would be reconsidered, and relief be given where relief was needed. Mr. Hudson, who represented the shipping interest of Sunderland, rose up to state that the chancellor of the exchequer, in speaking of the prosperity of the country, had not contended that it was owing to free trade. He had not put it upon

that principle at all: he merely stated a fact. Mr. Hudson, therefore, reminded the House that, before free trade existed, the country had enjoyed as much prosperity as it now had, and that money was quite as cheap in the market; whilst the shipping, the colonial, and agricultural interests were then not, as now, depressed and half ruined. Other speakers took the same tone.

The House was evidently in a generous mood. Considering that Mr. Disraeli, whenever the opportunity offered, seldom spared his opponents, it was somewhat remarkable that more was not made out of what party spirit might have construed into a recantation of opinion. Mr. Hume, it is true, had said that "the chancellor of the exchequer stood now in the same situation in which Sir Robert Peel stood after he first introduced those important changes in our financial and commercial system;" but that he would not pursue the matter farther, and unnecessarily wound the right hon. gentleman's feelings. Mr. Reynolds, in the course of his speech, said that if Sir Robert Peel, when he repealed the corn laws, had "found the Whigs bathing and ran away with their clothes," Mr. Disraeli in his turn, by his financial statement, had found Sir Charles Wood napping, and had run away with his budget. Mr. Wakley, the member for Finsbury, after declaring that the statements made by Mr. Disraeli only proved how sound were the principles of the free traders, and how completely they vindicated the course Sir Robert Peel had pursued, cried out, "Would to God Sir Robert Peel had been alive to listen to the elaborate and profound homage paid to him by the chancellor of the exchequer in the exposition of the facts that he had submitted to the House to-night! Homage of a more exalted character, or more calculated to increase the admiration of the country for the memory of that great statesman, was never made either in a senate or any other assembly." With the exception of these

allusions to the past conduct of Mr. Disraeli, the debate was singularly free from personalities—indeed, it was characterized by a geniality, a forbearance, and a chivalrous tone not always apparent in the proceedings of the House of Commons. The resolutions introduced by the chancellor of the exchequer were unanimously agreed to.

A few nights after this financial statement had been made, the ministers were invited to a banquet in the city, presided over by the lord mayor. Their reception was most cordial; and as the host rose to give the toast of the evening—"the health of Her Majesty's ministers"—his good wishes for the prosperity of the cabinet were warmly re-echoed. Lord Derby replied. His speech was listened to with deep attention, for a rumour had got abroad that he had not been well pleased with the statements of his lieutenant, and that he intended to take the first public opportunity that offered to show the country that the principle of Protection had not been abandoned. There was nothing in his matter to create excitement until he came to his closing remarks. "Not many days have elapsed," said Lord Derby, "since a right hon. friend of mine, in a speech which fully and amply refuted the unworthy notion that a man of wit and genius cannot grapple with the ordinary details of statistics—that a man possessing high ability, a vivid imagination, and great eloquence cannot master the driest commercial and financial topics—most ably and most eloquently demonstrated to an admiring House of Commons the great progress which our trade and commerce have made in recent years. . . . There was one point, however, which my right hon. friend in that able speech did not touch upon, and properly did not touch upon, because it did not belong to the fiscal and financial branch of the subject to which his attention was then properly and exclusively devoted. But although he did not touch upon that topic, it is one which I conceive no government

ought to lose sight of in estimating the social and political condition of the country—namely, not only the prosperity and the advancement of commerce, but the effect which may be produced on the condition in which we may find those large classes which, unconnected with commerce, are yet an element of our strength as being mainly producers, though they are also consumers. My lord, a government charged with the administration of the affairs of this country would ill deserve the confidence of any portion of the people, if it confined to the interests of a single class the attention which is due to all, or if it deprived a single class of that share of its attention which it is bound impartially to afford to all; and the problem which every government has to solve is—how to reconcile apparently conflicting interests, so that while giving no undue advantage to one class of our fellow-citizens over another, it may promote the interests of all, and by mutual concessions, and by mutual compromises, may blend the interests of all in one harmonious whole."

When the press circulated these words throughout the country considerable agitation arose. What was meant by "mutual concessions and mutual compromises?" How were the interests of all to be blended in one harmonious whole? The chancellor of the exchequer was in favour of indirect taxation and opposed to direct taxation; were the government then about to return to Protection? These questions were freely asked on all sides. The Peelites and the free traders took alarm, and once more the League held its meetings and stimulated its spokesmen. Humour drew a cartoon, in which it summed up the situation. The scene was Epsom. Lord Derby was holding a confidential conversation with his trainer, whilst two horses, labelled respectively "Protection" and "Free Trade," with their jockeys up, were seen curveting about on the course. "Which do you declare to win with, my lord?" asks Mr. Punch.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON SUFFERANCE.

ON meeting parliament in his new capacity as chancellor of the exchequer, Mr. Disraeli had laid before the House of Commons the business necessary to be gone through before the cabinet recommended a dissolution. He had said, apart from the proceedings indispensable for the supply of Her Majesty's service, that there were three measures of paramount importance —the militia bill, chancery reform, and the distribution of the four forfeited seats consequent upon the disfranchisement of Sudbury and St. Albans—which he desired to see speedily enrolled upon the statute-book. The militia bill had already been brought before the House; chancery reform was in the hands of the lord chancellor; thus the assignment of the forfeited seats was the only one of the three measures which had as yet not been presented for discussion. To Mr. Disraeli this question of redistribution was now intrusted. Sudbury had been disfranchised in 1844, St. Albans but recently. Each borough had returned two members to parliament; thus there were four seats now vacant and ready to be offered to boroughs and competing divisions of shires.

In a full house Mr. Disraeli moved (May 10, 1852) "That leave be given to bring in a bill to assign the seats forfeited by the disfranchisement of the boroughs of St. Albans and Sudbury." He was of opinion, he said, that those seats should be filled up before the dissolution of parliament took place. He was as unable to define the magic in that particular number 658 as he was to prove why twelve should be the number fixed for that tribunal which was the most popular in

the country.* The foundation of all these arrangements was prescription; prescription which consisted of rules created by experience and sanctioned by custom. Prescription was, after all, the most important element of order, of liberty, and of progress; and although he was not inclined to yield to that principle any superstitious adherence, he was still of opinion that the time was not arrived when prescription could be lightly treated by a House of Commons. The inconvenience of outraging such a principle was more easy to comprehend than it was to establish the peculiar arrangement in question. A violation of prescription was an element of disturbance; it led to discontent; it offered a premium to extravagant projects; it invited men to immature schemes and hazardous suggestions; and were it for no other reason than that he felt it would be their duty to warn the House against that which had become a continuous and systematic deficiency in the aggregate numbers of the House of

* The number of the members for the House of Commons stands thus:—

For England and Wales,	498
Scotland.	60
	(Before 1832, 45; after 1832, 58).
Ireland,	105
	(Before 1832, 100).
Total,	658

From Edward I. to Henry VIII., the House of Commons consisted of 74 knights and about 200 burgesses. Henry VIII. extended the right of election to Wales and to certain counties and towns in England, and increased the number of members by thirty-three. Between the reigns of Henry VIII. and Charles II., no less than 180 members were added to the House by royal charter alone. At the date of the union with Scotland the number of members was 518. The Act of union with Scotland added forty-five representatives of that kingdom, afterwards increased to sixty. The Act of union with Ireland made a further addition to the House of 100 Irish members, afterwards increased to 105. As we shall see, from the nature of Mr. Gladstone's remarks in reply to Mr. Disraeli, there is no *constitutional* limit to the number of members of the House of Commons.

Commons. Deeply convinced of the inconvenience and of the peril of indulging in that continuous and systematic deficiency in their numbers, Her Majesty's ministers had felt it their duty to express that opinion to the House.

If the government, continued Mr. Disraeli, followed their own inclinations, he hardly knew any subject which they would more freely avoid than the settlement of questions like the present. They were essentially invidious. In old days, whenever questions concerning the appropriation of vacant seats were introduced, party passions were necessarily excited. In a country where the government was carried on by the machinery of political party, it was scarcely possible to offer a suggestion for the settlement of a question of the kind, without, of course, the imputation of political motives, and perhaps without the possibility of political bias. But at the present day, a ministry that attempted to recommend to the House measures for the settlement of such questions, had not merely to encounter the ancient and traditional sentiments of opposite parties. Of late years another element had entered into the discussion of these subjects, which tended peculiarly to embitter feelings, to create jealousies, and to increase difficulties; and that was the unhappy misunderstanding between town and country, which he, for one, notwithstanding all that had passed, hoped yet might be of shorter duration than some persons were disposed to believe.

That unfortunate jealousy which existed between town and country had given rise to an anxiety in a very considerable portion of the country, to see whether other elements wherewith to form a constituency might not be devised than those which had hitherto supplied elements of the electoral body. He had seen many plans which, if they were carried into effect, would send members to parliament by means entitled in every way to their respect, but other than those which were generally had recourse to. It had been proposed that two

of the members for the vacant seats should be apportioned to the University of London. He could truly say that that proposition had not been viewed by Her Majesty's ministers with any sort of prejudice: it had, on the contrary, been observed with interest and with sympathy. He could admire the idea that would permit science and learning, by the immediate exercise of the popular suffrage, to take their place in that House, without the embarrassment of political connection, and without the inconveniences of party passions. But when that question was examined the difficulties were not inconsiderable.

In all suggestions which would lay down as a principle that the elements of their constituent body should be of a less absolutely material character than heretofore—that the intellectual and the moral qualities should be permitted to exercise their influence on that House without a necessary connection with political party—in all those suggestions there was something so plausible to the reason, and so captivating to the imagination, that he could easily understand that they had excited a great public interest, and engaged the approbation of many individuals who were entitled to the highest respect. Suggestions had been made, for example, that it would be desirable that the learned societies, for which that metropolis was celebrated, should furnish a member or members to that House; and, at the first glance, remembering who would probably be among the members thus deputed to that House, it must be admitted to be a proposition highly deserving of their examination. Take the Royal Society, for example. It was a very ancient society. It was founded by a monarch. It had been adorned from the days of Sir Isaac Newton by some of the greatest men whom England had produced. And at that moment it counted among its members some of their fellow-subjects of whom they were most proud. But the House must remember that, when they talk of the

learned societies, in the nineteenth century learned societies no longer necessarily consisted of learned men. The necessity of having a large revenue, and of raising that revenue by public subscriptions, permitted a great number of individuals to be enrolled among learned societies who had no other claim to that distinction than that which was conferred by their wealth and the general respectability of their character. They would not necessarily, therefore, because they delegated to the learned societies the privilege of sending a member or members to parliament, have a constituency formed of learned men.

Another difficulty in the case was to draw the line, if once they admitted a principle so fluctuating in its elements. If the Royal Society—he took that as the oldest and the most distinguished—was entitled to have a representative in that House on the ground that that society itself was a representative of science, there were many other societies who might also assume to represent science. Why, if they admitted the Royal Society, on what principle could they shut out the Geographical Society, or the Zoological Society, or the Astronomical Society? And if they were to take all those societies, and say that by aggregating them together they should form a considerable constituency to whom collectively should be given a representative in parliament, what would prevent new geographical societies, new zoological societies, and new astronomical societies being formed tomorrow, which might urge their claim to the possession of the franchise on the same plea? In fact it was evident that, dealing with the materials before them, it would be in the power of any body of men—any club, for example—to give themselves a scientific designation, to affect scientific pursuits, and to make that a claim for the exercise of the franchise. Therefore, on examining the claims of the learned societies to that privilege, he felt that the difficulties were too great for the government to overcome, and they had

consequently reluctantly dismissed them from consideration.

There was then, proceeded Mr. Disraeli, the claim of the universities which were not represented to consider. That appeared at the first blush to be an extremely plausible plea. The ancient universities of England were represented—the University of Dublin was represented—why then, for example, should not the Scotch universities be represented? But any one who had investigated the question, who had looked into the condition of the Scotch universities, with every wish to recommend such a measure to the House, would find that the elements of a popular constituency were totally wanting; that in the Scotch universities, for instance, there was no body like the Convocation of their English universities; that they had students who never, or rarely ever, became graduates; that there was no privilege annexed in Scotland to the taking out of an academic degree, and that therefore it was seldom that any individual took a degree. If, then, they invested the united universities of Scotland with the privilege of being represented in that House, the privilege would, in fact, be in possession of a few rectors, and about a hundred professors. The elements of a popular constituency were altogether wanting.* Nor could he notice the claim of the London University, as at present that university was too immature, its development too imperfect, for urging any well-founded claim of the nature then in question.

There had also been, he said, another proposition made, which possessed many causes why it should be entertained with the deepest consideration. The government had been urged to recommend to the House to concede, at least, one member to the Inns of Court. The four Inns of Court would, no doubt, afford a considerable and most respectable constituency—a constituency of some thousands arising from corporations

* In 1858 a measure was introduced which conferred on Scottish graduates no little share in the administration of their respective universities.

that had existed from immemorial ages, that had taken a distinguished part in the history of that country, and which had sent to that House some of its most eminent members. The government considered it as no objection to that plan, that an eminent lawyer, by the confidence of the Inns of Court, might find his way into that House without the taint of political or party connection. The government thought that, in an age favourable to legal reform, for example, it was very possible that the appreciation of his fellow-lawyers might select some student who would otherwise shrink from the coarser collisions of public life on the hustings, and yet might take his place in the House of Commons as the representative of a constituency of some thousands of honourable and learned men, and afford by his erudition and his counsel a very great assistance to the deliberations of that House. But, after giving to the question the most deliberate and the most anxious consideration, the government found it impossible to avoid the conclusion that it would be a hopeless task to propose to the House of Commons the allocation of one or two members to the Inns of Court, unless prepared to concede the same privilege to other similar constituencies.

He knew, he said, there was a prejudice—which he did not share—against the too considerable appearance of lawyers in that House. He begged to say that he did not share it, because he remembered how much of their liberty was owing to their law, and was founded upon their law, and that in the most critical periods of their history, lawyers had been the most eminent and fearless champions of the rights of the people of England. He confessed he was surprised, therefore, at the existence of a prejudice such as that, to which, however, he must most reluctantly yield. It was one he had always deplored, one which he could never cease to lament, when he recollects that lawyers had been not only the great upholders of English liberties, but also the greatest

ornaments of the House of Commons; when he remembered that Sir Edward Coke and Lord Bacon both sat in that House; when he remembered that the revered names of Selden and of Somers both belonged to the House of Commons; that in an after age that House resounded with the golden eloquence of Mansfield, and was once adorned by the majestic virtues of Romilly; and that it was their happiness to remember that amongst their members the esteemed descendants of some of those great men were still to be found. But though he could not agree in a prejudice which he thought unwarranted by facts, he felt it would not do for the government to propose, unless the proposition were attended by some identical or analogous projects, to allot one or more of the four vacant seats to the Inns of Court; therefore, on the part of the government, after careful consideration, and with the most ample desire to introduce constituencies founded upon those elements, and believing that they might contribute to the increased reputation of that assembly, he must renounce at present any attempt to form a constituency out of those interesting but, he feared, impracticable elements.

Having, therefore, considered the various suggestions that had been laid before him, Mr. Disraeli said he would now proceed to state how the government proposed to deal with the four forfeited seats. The constituency of the West Riding of Yorkshire was about 37,000; and they proposed to apportion two of the vacant seats to that constituency, dividing the West Riding into two districts, each of which should be represented by two members. Leeds was to be the town of election for the northern division of the riding; and Wakefield the election town for the southern division. The two remaining seats were to be given to the southern division of the county of Lancashire.

There was no discussion on the motion. The only opponent was Mr. Gladstone, who, in a long speech, criticised less the

details of Mr. Disraeli's measure than the expediency of introducing it at the present moment. He disputed the statement that the House of Commons was limited to any "constitutional number." There was no "magic" nor "cabalistic" virtue in the total "658." There was nothing beyond mere accident, and the duration of about forty years, that should recommend the number 658 to their notice. There was a popular error on that subject—there was, he believed, an idea in the popular mind that the number 658 represented the great balance of interests in that country. Yet, he would challenge Mr. Disraeli to find that number distinctly stated in any one single act of parliament relating to the representation of the people in that House. The number 658 was never intended to be the legal and constitutional number which composed the House of Commons. It was a pure question of convenience and policy, and nothing else, as to what the number of members of that House should be. Still, that was merely a secondary matter. The question was, was it wise to bring forward such a measure in a moribund parliament? The eve of a dissolution was the worst possible moment to introduce a proposal of that kind. The forfeited seats ought not to be held up to the country as prizes for every man to snatch at. The matter ought to be discussed and settled, not in an unsettled and provisional state of things like the present, but when they had an administration in possession of definite and decided political power. He would not meet the proposal by a direct negative, but would move that the House pass to the "orders of the day." On a division, the amendment of Mr. Gladstone was accepted by a majority of eighty-six. It was not until some years later that these forfeited seats were dealt with. In 1861 the government of Lord Palmerston accepted, to a certain degree, the proposals of Mr. Disraeli. Two seats were then given to the West Riding of Yorkshire; but, instead of South Lancashire being divided, a third member

was placed at the disposal of the county, and the town of Birkenhead was enfranchised.

This rejection of Mr. Disraeli's scheme was not so much directed against the measure itself, as it was against the government declining at once to appeal to the country. The burning question of the hour was, whether Protection or free trade was to be the commercial policy of the future. Lord Derby had himself said, on taking office, that he would abide by the verdict of the nation as to the maintenance or rejection of free-trade principles. Why, then, did he not dissolve parliament? It was an unheard of thing, cried the Liberals, for men who had made Protection a battle-cry for years, to take office, and then to refuse to state openly whether they intended to propose an alteration in the corn laws or not! The game of thimble-rig was about to be played, and the country gulled and plundered under a thimble-rig administration! The Conservatives were keeping matters dark, in order at the election to canvass the counties as Protectionists and the boroughs as free traders!

"It was in vindication of the constitutional principle," said Mr. Gladstone, "that a government which found itself at issue with the existing parliament upon a cardinal point of its policy, was bound either to resign (which of course no one recommends under the circumstances) or else to make its appeal to the people. But there was another object which parliament, I think, had in view; and that was, to discharge its solemn duty to those great principles of commercial policy which we are bound, I think, to see well brought home into haven, and that at the earliest moment. It is a folly against which every man ought to guard, to suppose that because the government are in power, and the principles of our law in regard to commerce have not been altered by past measures, therefore we are to rest satisfied. It would be, I think, no fulfilment, but an abandonment of our duty, to

be contented that the matter should so remain. It has been admitted on the other side, that it is the solemn duty of us all to bring this question to a formal and final issue; and that can only be done, as the head of the government stated, and all its members, I believe, have allowed, by an appeal to the people at a dissolution; and therefore, in seeking a dissolution, it is not for any partial or party object, but it is because, if there be one duty more clearly incumbent than another at the present time upon that large majority of the House of Commons who have on repeated occasions testified their own cordial adhesion to the principles of free trade, it is this—that they should not be content to leave those principles to exist upon sufferance—to leave them at the mercy of the chapter of accidents; that they should not be content (I frankly own it) to leave these principles, as matters now stand, in the guardianship of gentlemen whose own inclinations, without doubt or disguise, are opposed to them, but that we should expedite that process which the prime minister himself has justly and fairly proposed—namely, that of obtaining the deliberate judgment of the constituency in regard to the principles of our commercial legislation; and then we should find the government in a position to lay down the course of policy by which they intend to be guided, and, if they find the opinion of the public adverse to the policy they had pursued, they might frankly and finally own and submit to that state of facts; so that, at length, this great controversy may be ended, and the machinery of the constitution fall into its usual course and order."

A wit in the House of Commons was asked, What was meant by "factious opposition?" "Wait till you see the Liberals out of office," he quietly replied. Lord Derby declined to be dictated to. He had said, on taking office, that for his own part he thought that the appeal to the constituencies ought to be made as speedily as was consistent with the interests of the country; but at the same time he declared

that neither taunts nor calumnies would induce him to recommend a dissolution sooner than he thought expedient. He had assumed, he would not say office, but its responsibilities, from no party motive of his own; the late government fell by their internal weakness, by their notorious incapacity, by the lukewarmness of their friends, and by their own quarrels. They had declared a dissolution inexpedient for themselves, and he wished to know with what face they now came forward in factious opposition, and sought to drive him to appeal to the country, after his declaration that the system of free trade should not be altered during the present session, but that the attention of the government would be solely directed to those great measures of legal and social reform on which the heart of the nation was set. If the business of the country were factiously interrupted, the evil that might result would be visited on the heads of those agitators who created the interruption. Though he desired to repair the injustice which certain classes of the community had sustained by the repeal of the corn laws, such a step could only be taken after careful deliberation, and then not by a bare majority, but after an expression of very general concurrence on the part of the country. The question he would then put before the country would be, "Will you give your confidence to the men who deserted the helm of the state in the hour of danger, and then joined in factious opposition to render all government impossible? Or will you rely on the government which did not shrink from the post of danger, which is determined to uphold the Protestant religion, to strengthen religious and moral education, to resist the aggression of those demagogues who employ their power over the masses only to mislead them, and to maintain the prerogatives of the crown and the privileges of parliament? These were the principles on which he should appeal to the country; he would then use the words put into the mouth of the meanest criminal, but not unworthy of the first

minister of the Crown, 'I elect to be tried by God and my country.'

In the present conflict of opinions, and owing to the expeditious manner in which the government had conducted the public business intrusted to them, the time for dissolving parliament was rapidly approaching. Mr. Disraeli, therefore, thought the hour opportune to inform his constituents of what had occurred in the past, and what was about to take place in the future. He utilised the leisure of the Whitsuntide recess in drawing up an important document addressed to his supporters. We give it in full, as since the date of its first issue it has never been republished:—

"GENTLEMEN,—I take the opportunity of returning into the county to inform you that on the dissolution of parliament, which may be shortly expected, I shall again solicit the distinguished office of being your member—an honour which you have twice unanimously conferred on me.

"The occasion is critical, and it is as well to disentangle from the misrepresentations of ignorant or interested persons what is really at stake.

"In 1842 Sir Robert Peel, at the head of the Conservative party, converted a considerable and continuous deficiency in the public revenue into a surplus by the imposition of an income tax, which also permitted him greatly to mitigate our tariff.

"These measures realized all the success which the Conservative party anticipated from them. In the course of four years, seven millions of pounds of customs duties were repealed without materially diminishing the revenue derived from that branch, and no domestic interest in the country suffered from the change.

"The principles on which these alterations were effected were the removal of prohibitions, the reduction of duties to such a scale as admitted 'fair competition' with domestic produce, and the free admission of all raw materials.

"I had the satisfaction of voting for these measures, in company with those gentlemen who now honour the present government with their support.

"Since the four years closing with 1845, during which the Conservative party carried these wise and beneficial measures, two great changes in our commercial system have taken place—the free introduction of foreign corn and of slave-grown sugar.

"The first of these arrangements was not originally contemplated in the commercial policy of Sir Robert Peel, for he opposed the repeal of the corn

laws within a few months previously to his abrogating them. When he recommended their repeal it was to meet an emergency; and he stated to Lord George Bentinck, in my hearing, that he believed that repeal would not materially affect the price of agricultural produce.

"The admission of slave-grown sugar was not approved by Sir Robert Peel.

"These two measures, unlike the preceding ones, have occasioned severe suffering among the producing classes which they affect. The distress of the agricultural classes has been admitted, announced, and deplored from the Throne, under the advice of a Whig ministry; and the consequences of the alteration of the sugar duties were so disastrous to our free-producing colonies that, within two years after the passing of the Act of 1846, a Whig ministry also found it necessary to modify their own measure.

"The sufferings of the agricultural and colonial classes have arisen from their being thrown into unlimited competition with the foreigner on unequal terms with the rest of their fellow-subjects. Those unequal conditions result in great measure from the peculiar imposts and the vexatious regulations to which our agricultural and sugar-producing industries are subject.

"The same precipitation which attended the repeal of the productive duties on corn and sugar accompanied the repeal of the navigation laws. Even the proposers of that measure now admit that 'the shipping interest, exposed to severe rivalry, is subject to burdens and restrictions which impede its prosperity.'

"This is the language of the minister who himself repealed the navigation laws, and yet left the burdens and restrictions which impede the prosperity of our mercantile marine. This opinion will be found in the recent address of Lord John Russell to his constituents. That address deserves the attentive study of the shipping interest.

"Her Majesty's ministers would consider these burdens and restrictions with a view to their removal.

"The farmers hitherto have been the persons who have been most injured by the repeal of the corn laws; but the diminution of rent in Great Britain is greater than is generally supposed. In preparing the financial statement for the year, it was officially represented to me that I must contemplate, in estimating the produce of the income tax, a diminution of rent not much less in amount than five millions sterling. Practically speaking, in this country rent has become a return for the capital invested in the improvement of land. Laws to secure a return for such investment are not for a moment to be tolerated, but laws which by imposing unequal taxes discourage that invest-

ment are, irrespective of their injustice, highly impolitic ; for nothing contributes more to the enduring prosperity of a country than the natural deposit of its surplus capital in the improvement of its soil. Justice to the land, in all systems of finance, is equally the interest of the proprietor and the farmer, but it is also equally the interest of the community.

"There is no portion of the United Kingdom that has suffered more from the precipitate repeal of the corn laws than Ireland. The claim of that country to the consideration of parliament is irresistible.

"The time has gone by when the injuries which the great producing interests endure can be alleviated or removed by a recurrence to the laws which, previously to 1846, protected them from such calamities. The spirit of the age tends to free intercourse, and no statesman can disregard with impunity the genius of the epoch in which he lives. But every principle of abstract justice, and every consideration of high policy, counsel that the producer should be treated as fairly as the consumer, and intimate that when the native producer is thrown into unrestricted competition with external rivals, it is the duty of the legislature in every way to diminish, certainly not to increase, the cost of production.

"It is the intention of Her Majesty's ministers to recommend to parliament, as soon as it is in their power, measures which may effect this end.

"One of the soundest means, among others, by which this result may be accomplished is a revision of our taxation. The times are favourable to such an undertaking ; juster notions of taxation are more prevalent than heretofore ; powerful agencies are stirring which have introduced new phenomena into finance, and altered the complexion of the fiscal world ; and the possibility of greatly relieving the burdens of the community, both by adjustment and reduction, seems to loom in the future.

"But nothing great can be effected by any ministry unless they are supported by a powerful majority in parliament. Our predecessors were men who, for personal honour and administrative ability, need not shrink from a comparison with any body of individuals qualified to serve Her Majesty ; but they were never sure of a parliamentary majority : hence much of their unsatisfactory conduct. They were justified, from the broken state of parties, in their continuance in office, which they never evinced any unworthy readiness to retain ; but it is far from desirable that such indulgence should become a chronic weakness of our constitution.

"In the brief period during which we have held the reins, although placed in a position of great

embarrassment, from the impossibility of at once appealing to the country, we have introduced three measures which, it is hoped, will soon become the law of the land. One is a measure of internal defence, which it is believed will soon prove both popular, economical, and efficient ; the second would confer on an interesting and important colony a constitution founded on the right principles which should govern dependencies ; the third will at length achieve a complete reform of the Court of Chancery.

"There was a fourth measure which we proposed. Two petty boroughs, long infamous for corruption, had been justly and wisely disfranchised. We recommended to parliament that these forfeited seats should be transferred to two of the most important communities of the country, distinguished not only for their vast wealth and teeming population, but by all the enduring elements of national greatness. A combination of parliamentary sections defeated on a technical pretext this wise and generous proposition, which would have added strength and lustre to the House of Commons, and have asserted the popular principle in a manner consistent with that maintenance of classes which becomes a free and ancient monarchy, and which is the best security for order and liberty.

"The time of the House of Commons has been much occupied of late by a discussion whether the management of the Roman Catholic college of Maynooth requires investigation. Without prejudging the question, Her Majesty's ministers have felt it their duty to support such an inquiry. We have been anxious to subdue the heat of religious controversy, and to deal impartially with all Her Majesty's subjects, whether in communion with the Church of Rome or the Church of England ; but we cannot sanction an opinion now in vogue that, since the Act of 1829, the constitution of the country has ceased to be Protestant. By the Act of Settlement our form of government is that of a Protestant monarchy ; and it is our belief that the people of this country are resolved so to maintain it, not only in form, but in spirit.

"Various schemes have been devised for the extension and improvement of the education of the people, and among others a measure was proposed by an intelligent community during the present session of parliament, to the principles of which we could not accede. The only principle in the present diversity of religious opinion which seems to be just is that of encouraging the voluntary efforts of the several religious bodies by grants of public money in proportion to the extent to which those efforts have been made. In asserting for all this universal right, we claim for the church, the national depository of sacred truth,

that the freedom of her efforts in the cause of education should not be fettered by regulations and restrictions which are not required to afford security for a due application of the public funds.

"I have touched, gentlemen, on most of the topics which now engage the attention of the country. They are not mean issues. The country will have to decide whether it will maintain a ministry formed on the principles of Conservative progress; whether it will terminate for ever, by just and conciliatory measures, the misconceptions which have too long prevailed between producer and consumer, and extinguish the fatal jealousy that rankles between town and country; whether our colonial empire shall be maintained and confirmed; whether the material development of Ireland shall at length be secured; whether such alterations as time and circumstance may appear to justify and require in the construction of the House of Commons shall be made in that spirit of revolution which has arrested the civilization of Europe, or in the spirit of our popular though not democratic institution; whether the Church of England shall still remain a national church; whether the Crown of England shall still be a Protestant crown.

"I believe that the county of Buckingham is not in doubt on these heads, and therefore I appeal to you with confidence for your support. I cannot vie with the patriots and the statesmen whom for so many generations you have sent up to parliament; but I will promise you this, on my part and on that of my colleagues, that if public opinion ratify the choice of our gracious sovereign, we will earnestly endeavour that the honour and the interests of the country shall not suffer by our administration.

"I remain, Gentlemen,

"Your obliged friend and servant,

B. DISRAELI.

"HUGHEN DEN MANOR,

"June 2, 1852."

Since the government declined to dissolve the Houses until the urgent measures they deemed necessary to pass had been entered upon the pages of the statute-book, it pleased a certain section of the Opposition to imitate recent tactics, and use every effort to thwart the ministerial policy. Nothing that was introduced was right; everything that was not introduced was wrong. If the militia bill was hurried through committee, an unnecessary scare was being created throughout the country; if the consideration of its clauses was de-

ferred, the government were neglecting the most vital interests of the people. If the Maynooth grant was brought forward, the government were being intimidated by the Roman Catholics; if it was not brought forward, the government were animated by a bigotry and intolerance disgraceful in an enlightened age like the present. If a constitution for New Zealand was discussed, our domestic prosperity was being sacrificed to a meddling colonial policy; if the debate on New Zealand was postponed, we forgot that we were an empire, and interested ourselves only in insular details. Then there were acrid discussions as to the remission of the hop duty, the paper duty, the advertisement duty, and the stamp on newspapers. Whatever the government proposed was disputed; whatever it opposed was warmly advocated. In the eyes of these obstructionists ministers were always in error.

Lord John Russell took advantage of this splenetic conduct on the part of certain of his followers to pass in review (June 14, 1852) the labours of the session. The ostensible reason for his appearance in the character of a self-elected critic upon ministerial mismanagement, was the occasion of an outrage having been committed upon a British subject. It seems that a Mr. Mather, an Englishman, had been cut down in the streets of Florence by an Austrian officer, and Lord Malmesbury, as the secretary for foreign affairs, had been intrusted with the diplomatic task of demanding reparation for the insult. According to Lord John, the foreign secretary had pursued a double course; he was frightened of Austria, but bullied Tuscany; in his correspondence with Vienna he had treated the affair as an unhappy accident, whilst in his correspondence with Florence he considered it a wanton outrage. Nor could he, continued the ex-premier, congratulate Lord Malmesbury upon the course he had pursued respecting the pecuniary consideration to be offered to Mr. Mather. The foreign secretary had pressed Mr. Mather to name a sum to compensate him for his wounded feelings; when

that sum was named, it was considered exorbitant, and instructions were then sent to the British representative at Florence to demand from the Tuscan government "a sum proportionate to the sufferings of Mr. Mather." Such a mode of conducting the affair, Lord John considered, could only lead to ridicule and contempt; it would degrade, not the country, but the government.

Having thus delivered himself upon the text of his discourse, the speaker branched off to other topics, and entered upon a severe criticism of the course of action the Derby cabinet had adopted since their accession to power. They had taken office upon a distinct understanding that they were to declare their policy, whereas they had studiously concealed it. What he and the country generally desired to know, continued Lord John, was not so much the particular measures to be proposed by the government, as the spirit in which they were to be framed. Did the present government, or did they not, adopt the financial and commercial policy which was established in 1842, and which was continued until the present moment? Was the policy of the last ten years beneficial to the country? ought it to be followed and adhered to, and care taken that it should not be abrogated? Ought that policy to be their guide, or was it injurious, mischievous, and would the injurious effects be averted by alteration? To these questions neither the House nor the country ever had anything like an answer. At first everybody entertaining liberal opinions had been delighted with the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer, for it was looked upon as conclusive in favour of a free-trade policy. "The right hon. gentleman, however," said Lord John, pointing to Mr. Disraeli, "found a critic, a commentator, and an adversary; and who was he? He appeared at the Mansion House in the person of the first lord of the treasury. That was the scene which Lord Derby chose for criticising his chancellor of the exchequer. The noble earl pointed out a great omission in his colleague's address,

and supplied it by something not as lucid and conclusive as the chancellor of the exchequer's statement, but by something that was eminently obscure and ambiguous. This was certainly a novel proceeding. As a member for London I have often had occasion to dine in the city, but it never occurred to me to avail myself of any of those opportunities to answer my own chancellor of the exchequer."

Now what did these conflicting statements signify? he asked. The premier talked mysteriously of Protection, whilst the chancellor of the exchequer in his recent address to his constituents, said that the time for restoring the protective duties of 1846 had gone by. Which policy was to be followed? He hoped, after the farmers had been deceived for the last four years about Protection being restored, that they would not allow themselves again to be deceived by the promise of measures which were to give them prosperity—a prosperity which indeed was only to be attained by the exercise of their skill and industry. In conclusion, the speaker condemned the various measures, with the exception of the militia bill, which the government had supported during the session. He found fault with their conduct in the matter of chancery reform, with their disturbance of the system of education in Ireland, and with their efforts to give the Established Church a portion of the grant for education. Such mismanagement arose, he said, from the government holding no decided opinions whatever. "This country," concluded Lord John Russell, "will never be satisfied, unless they have men ruling the country who have some principles and some opinions. It may seem to be a popular thing to say that the country has only by a majority to express an opinion in favour of a corn law, and that the corn laws will be re-imposed; or that if there be a majority against such a policy, then we shall have free trade. That may seem to be a popular declaration, and one likely to attract popular favour; but depend upon it,

it is not so. The people of this country would be better pleased to see men who had some opinions, and who were ready to bring questions clearly before them. Is the country likely to place its confidence in a government that has no opinions, no principles, and which is ready to be guided, by any wind that may rise, into any port that is open for them?"

This attack upon the Conservative policy gave rise to a debate, in which various members joined before Mr. Disraeli stood up in vindication of himself and his party. Lord Stanley defended the foreign secretary as to his management of the Mather affair. Lord John Russell had supposed that the transaction had been characterized in two different ways by Lord Malmesbury; but in terming it an accident, the noble lord merely expressed an opinion that there was nothing in it of a national character; that it was the hasty act of an individual; but looking at it as a personal, not a national act, it was brutal and unprovoked. The inquiry before the Tuscan court had been a fair one, and the officer had been tried before a legal tribunal of his country and acquitted. It was very difficult to say what course the government could take, when a British subject had been insulted in a foreign country, and the offender, when tried by a national tribunal, had been acquitted, though illegally. It would be, he said, most unwise to make Austria solely responsible for a transaction of that kind, since it would virtually recognize the military occupation of Tuscany by that power.

Mr. Osborne lamented that the case of Mr. Mather should have been mixed up with the imbecility of the present government. The attempt to defend the foreign secretary had done little to clear up the case. The government was bound to call upon Austria, who had expressed no contrition for the offence; on the contrary, she commended the officer who cut down Mr. Mather. He charged Lord Malmesbury with having trifled with the honour

of the country, and having disgraced them all in the eyes of Europe.

The Marquis of Granby drew the attention of the House to the commercial policy of the country. If it could be shown that their late policy had benefited the people at large, it should be continued and carried out; but if, as he believed it had had, and would have, evil effects on all classes, it should be gradually modified, and eventually reversed. He read a variety of statements showing that the colonies, Scotland, Spital-fields, the shipping interest, as well as other trades, so far from prospering, were suffering; he doubted even whether the manufacturing interest was in a state of real prosperity. Pauperism, crime, and emigration had increased; while the deposits in savings banks had, since 1846, gradually declined.

Lord Palmerston declined to follow Lord Granby, regarding all such discussions upon a question that was dead as waste of time. He wished to address to the House a few observations upon the first topic; and he confessed that he had read with anything but feelings of satisfaction the papers relative to the affair of Mr. Mather. He found much to criticise in the proceedings both of the late and of the present government—in almost all parties, in short, but Mr. Mather and his son. What was the course which, in that case, the British government ought to have pursued? First, to ascertain the facts of the case, and if there had been a wrong, to require the punishment of the offender and compensation to the sufferer. No one could say that in that case a grievance was not suffered. The outrage had been committed by an Austrian officer at Florence. Who was responsible? The government under which the outrage was committed; but where there was no power there ought to be no responsibility. The Austrians in Florence were dependent upon the will of the Austrian government, not upon that of Tuscany; the Austrian troops in Florence were not amenable to the Tuscan govern-

ment; so that Austria was, *prima facie*, the government from which reparation should have been demanded. The present cabinet were also open to criticism for calling upon the sufferer to assess his own damages. He agreed with the government in the importance of maintaining the independence of Tuscany; but that could not be done by making one country pay for what had been done by another. The practical lesson read to Tuscany might have been better read to Austria. The papers showed the lamentable condition of a large portion of the Italian states; and he hoped the present government, being upon friendly terms with the two governments mainly interested in the decision of that matter, would endeavour to persuade the governments of France and Austria to terminate the anomalous state of things which prevailed in many of those states.

When Lord Palmerston had concluded, Mr. Disraeli rose up. He said no one could pretend that, though the act in question was outrageous and cruel, it was not, what Lord Malmesbury had described it, an accidental one. When it was said that the government had not applied for redress in the right quarter, but that they ought to have applied to Austria, he replied that the course they had pursued had been the result of anxious inquiry. Where a state maintained diplomatic relations with the British government, it was felt that with rights there must be correlative duties; and as Tuscany had been recognized and treated as an independent state, an outrage upon a British subject in Tuscany ought to be repaired by Tuscany. He had no doubt that Austria would have been very willing that they should seek reparation of her instead of Tuscany, as it would have been a virtual acknowledgment of her supremacy in that country; but that was not the policy which the present government wished to maintain with relation to Italy. He fully justified the course taken by Lord Malmesbury, and his recommendation to Mr. Mather to accept, as an acknow-

ledgment of a wrong, a fine from the government of Tuscany. With reference to the closing observations of Lord Palmerston, Mr. Disraeli avowed that the government looked with great interest and anxiety to the state of Italy; but he reminded the noble lord that it was not worse now than the present government had found it. Her Majesty's ministers were bound to proceed in the matter with great deliberation; yet he hoped the time might come when the fairest portion of Europe should no longer be occupied by foreign garrisons.

He then proceeded to deal with the "postscript" of Lord John Russell, and to defend the government from the charges advanced by the member for London, in his criticism of the work of the session. "I am bound to notice," he said, "the elaborate attack of the noble lord. He has taken a review of what has occurred during the brief period that we have sat upon these benches. We have heard from him a statement of that kind before, during the course of this session. The very first night that I took my seat, the noble lord rose and opened his batteries. He has since recurred to the attack; but his drums were muffled, and the fire slackened. Now we have a last effort; but it is a forlorn hope that will not take the citadel." Mr. Disraeli begged to differ from Lord John as to the value of the measures for chancery reform; he believed that if they passed they would confer upon the country the greatest blessing that society had for a long while experienced. He explained, at some length, the conduct of the government in treating of the great question of education, and denied that they had recourse to unjustifiable proceedings—that they had stealthily obtained, and cheated the House out of, a money vote. In spite of the charges brought against them, ministers had no fear as to the future.

"Sir," said Mr. Disraeli, "the noble lord may rest assured that we shall go to the country with no undue confidence, I trust, but at least in a manner which will

allow us to meet the people without shame. And, whatever the noble lord may say of our change of opinions, I shall be prepared to vindicate them here, or before my constituents, in a manner which, I trust, will entitle me to maintain their good opinion which I now possess. I deny that there has been, on our part, at any time since the unfortunate circumstances of 1846—circumstances which I ever deeply deplored—I deny that there has been any attempt to change the position which we then took up. Sir, I do now, and ever shall, look on the changes which took place in 1846, both as regards the repeal of the corn laws and the alteration of the sugar duties, as totally unauthorized. I opposed them, as most of my honourable friends about me opposed them, from an apprehension of the great suffering which must be incurred by such a change. That suffering in a great degree, although it may be limited to particular classes, has in some instances been even severer than we anticipated; but, sir, I deny that, at any time those laws were passed, either I or the bulk of those with whom I have the honour to act have ever maintained a recurrence to the same laws that regulated those industries previous to 1846. You cannot recall a single speech to that effect; I defy anybody to quote any speech that I ever made, or any sentence that I ever uttered, that recommended such a course as desirable or possible. Why, what is your charge against my Lord Derby? You say that he recommended a fixed duty, and now that he has intimated his belief that the country would not support such a policy. Well, but is a fixed duty a recurrence to the laws which regulated the introduction of corn or sugar prior to 1846? If my Lord Derby had declared that he counselled a recurrence to those laws, don't you think that you would be ready to refer to his speeches—that night after night you would din in our ears your quotations from what he said? I defy you to produce a single sentence of the kind.

"When we come to this question of a fixed duty, that is talked of so much, I must say now what I said before in this House, that I will not pin my political career on any policy which is not, after all, a principle, but a measure. . . . Our wish is, that the interests which we believe were unjustly treated in 1846 should receive the justice which they deserve, with as little injury to those who may have benefited more than they were entitled as it is possible for human wisdom to devise. Sir, I call that reconciling the interests of the consumer and the producer, when you do not permit the consumer to flourish by placing unjust taxes upon the producer; while at the same time you resort to no tax which gives to the producer an unjust and artificial price for his production. Those are the views which we supported in opposition. Those are the views which we are resolved, if possible, to carry into effect. Our object is to do justice to those classes, towards whom we believe that in 1846 you acted unjustly; and we attempt to do that without disturbing the system which is now established. Sir, I believe that the country will support these views. I believe that that temperate, that remedial, and that purely conciliatory policy will be by the country ratified. And when the noble lord, the member for the city of London, talks of our being a party without principles, why, he seems plainly to admit that he is an Opposition without a cry. In his woefulness he confesses his desolation; no principle, no opinion, no movement, no agitation. What is left to the noble lord? With the imagination of a poet—for he is still a poet—at his last gasp, to my great surprise he discovered a resource. 'Something,' says the noble lord, 'we must rally round. We must rally round the only thing that is left to us, that profound apophthegm of the right hon. gentleman, the member for Ripon' (Sir James Graham). The right hon. gentleman has emblazoned on his standard the original, the inspiring inscription, 'Don't put any

confidence in Lord Derby.' A year ago was emblazoned on that self-same standard, 'Do not trust in the noble lord, the member for the city of London.' Sir, we shall survive the want of confidence reposed in us by the right hon. gentleman, the member for Ripon; and if the only way in which the noble lord thinks he can make the present government unpopular—if the only mode by which he thinks he can unseat the present administration—is by announcing to the country that it does not possess the confidence of the right hon. gentleman, the member for Ripon, why then, sir, I must express my heartfelt conviction that this time next year we shall still have the honour of serving Her Majesty."

The confidence of Mr. Disraeli in the Conservatism of the country was soon to be put to the test. Before the summer heat had made St. Stephen's an infliction, causing its members to look fondly forward to the breezes of the moors or the delights of country-house life, parliament had been dissolved. In marked contrast to the incapacity of the late government, all the measures which the Derby cabinet had proposed had been disposed of before the end of June. The pages of the statute-book clearly proved not only the ability, but the activity of ministers, in spite of interruption and all the tactics of obstruction. The militia act had become law; a constitution had been granted to the distant island of New Zealand; various reforms had been effected in our courts of law and equity, notably an act to diminish the technicalities of special pleading and to amend the procedure in the common law courts; the abolition of the office of the masters had remedied some of the grievances complained of by societies in the court of chancery; the jurisdiction of the county courts had been extended; whilst true to his maxim, *Sanitas sanitatum omnia sanitas est*, Mr. Disraeli had seen that two acts for the improvement of the water supply of the metropolis and the restriction of intramural interments were carried.

The success of the government in thus effectively dealing with public business was made the subject of comment by Lord Lyndhurst, who referred to the past labours of the session in complimentary language. After stating that the large number of public measures and the vast amount of private business pending at the beginning of the session had been disposed of, he said he thought it his duty to come down to the House to congratulate the cabinet and the country on the course pursued by his noble friend at the head of the government. "I thank my noble friend," he said, "for the firmness with which he resisted those repeated attacks which were made—those clamours which were raised on account of his resisting the cry for an immediate dissolution. It was of the greatest importance to the country that the proceedings to which I refer should have taken place. I may venture to say further, that during the four months that have elapsed since my noble friend came into office, bills of greater importance have passed your Lordships' House than have passed during any session since the commencement of the present parliament; and I am sure my humble thanks and the thanks of the country are due to my noble friend for having resisted the clamours that were raised."

"If the government," said Lord Derby in reply, "are entitled to any praise, it is for what my noble and learned friend has given us credit, namely, for having resisted importunity from various quarters, urging us in the most vehement manner to dissolve parliament, at a time when it would have been extremely convenient for us personally to have dissolved; but we refrained from advising that step, seeing that a dissolution of parliament at that moment would have involved the country in great present inconvenience, and possibly, or even probably, would have led to the postponement, if not the loss, of many useful measures which we thought it our bounden duty to attempt to carry into law. . . . I stated at the commencement of the session that we

should endeavour to abstain, as far as possible, from all topics of a party or controversial character; and if we deserve credit for anything, it is for having formed a just estimate of that degree of public spirit which we believe would prevail in this and the other House of parliament, if they would permit us to act upon the principle we had announced, of not urging measures which might lead to controversy, and inviting them to join with us, forgetful and regardless of party considerations, in urging forward those measures which, apart from all party feeling, were imperatively demanded for the benefit of the country— involving the promotion of the military defences of the country, a vast improvement in the courts of law and equity, and provisions for the sanitary welfare of the metropolis. My lords, I am happy to say that this and the other House of parliament have fully justified the estimate we formed in that respect; and although the expectation that it would be possible to pass all these bills—nay, I almost say to pass any of them—was treated in the first instance with a species of contemptuous ridicule, I have the satisfaction to say, at the close of one of the shortest sessions on record, that not one of these great objects remains unaccomplished; and if this government should cease to exist from the day on which I am speaking, it would be a source of unfeigned satisfaction and gratification to me, that the four months during which we have held office have been marked by the passing of as many important measures, and as beneficial to the public interest, as under any previous administration, however strong and powerful."

Parliament was dismissed July 1, 1852. "It is my intention," said Her Majesty, addressing both Houses, "without delay to dissolve this present parliament; and it is my earnest prayer that in the exercise of the high functions which, according to our free constitution, will devolve upon the several constituencies, they may be directed by an all-wise Providence to the selection

of representatives whose wisdom and patriotism may aid me in my unceasing endeavours to sustain the honour and dignity of my crown, to uphold the Protestant institutions of the country and the civil and religious liberty which is their natural result, to extend and improve the national education, to develop and encourage industry, art, and science, and to elevate the moral and social condition, and thereby promote the welfare and happiness of my people."

During the autumn the country was the battle-ground on which was contested the struggle for victory between the opposing forces of Protection and free trade. Manipulated statistics, false conclusions, and garbled extracts were freely circulated by both sides; and all was deemed fair that led to triumph.

A few days after the dissolution, July 14, Mr. Disraeli met a large body of his constituents at dinner at Newport Pagnel. He took the opportunity to lay before his audience the latest development of his views respecting "protection," "the better adjustment of agricultural burdens," "a fixed duty upon corn," and the "new principle of justice to the cultivators of the soil." After a few prefatory remarks he proceeded to say:—"Gentlemen, when I addressed you last as your member in this room, you will remember what was then the position of the Opposition of that day. It was one of great difficulty. The change of 1846 was a change of the most remarkable description. I was, among others, opposed to that change. I thought the risk of that change was too great under the circumstances—too great for this country to incur. I thought the disturbing circumstances, so far as the agricultural interests were concerned, which that change would produce were not a matter of theory—that they were inevitable, and that no one had a right to incur the responsibility of voting for a change so unpremeditated, so insecure, and so inconsistent; and I must say, gentlemen, that every subsequent session of parliament has perfectly fortified the opinion

I then formed. I knew—all knew—the effects of that change upon our position. We all knew that we should have very great difficulty to regain the position we had lost. At all times it is difficult to regain a position which is forfeited; and I stated years ago my individual conviction of that sound policy which it was your duty to follow.

"But, gentlemen, your opponents were ever anxious that you should pursue a false policy. They have always said, 'Ask only for that which it is impossible to get, and then you will occupy a sensible position.' But, gentlemen, we occupy safe ground by demanding that which is truly practicable, instead of following the tactics of an Opposition which would, in the precipitancy of their strong convictions, knock their brains against the first opposing wall they meet. I told you to form your views a little more deep than foolish. I said 'There is great agricultural distress in consequence of a change in the law: your opponents taunt you when you seek to go back to that law, and they are all-sufficient in their opposition. I want you to ascertain what is the cause of your suffering, and if possible to accept the new policy, and to consider what recompense you can find in other measures.'

"Gentlemen, that was the advice I presumed to give, and it is a question most interesting to the numerous and influential body assembled here to-day. I say, what is the reason the English producer, the English occupier of land, cannot compete with the foreign producer or occupier of land? I have always said—and I don't know that I have ever heard any argument of an intelligent opponent that I could really refer to as in any way conclusive against it—I have always said the reason is 'that the English producer is under a system of taxation—a system which is, in general, applied to himself—which is in particular applied to the class to which he belongs—entailing upon him burdens which do not allow him to run the race on equal terms with the

others.' That is what I said. And, gentlemen, I have also said that the protectionist system was not to be justified unless you can show these circumstances exist. And I still believe these circumstances do exist in the country, however much they may be modified, and that the principle of Protection is sound—that in a society which is artificial, in which there exists a financial system so complicated as our own, it was much better to adhere to compensating arrangements for the protection of the cultivator of the soil than that you should madly leave him an unequal competitor with the foreigner. And this principle, I say, is always to be modified according to existing circumstances. But, gentlemen, the protective principle was not only a sound one, but it was a principle to the advantage of the country, and the only principle upon which our present system of finance could be vindicated. You could not vindicate a system that rested individually and mainly upon the cultivators of the soil, unless in its operation it gave some compensatory relief to those whom it placed under particular restrictions. Well, I say, gentlemen, if the country has chosen to abrogate that system, and if the majority of the people of this country are of opinion it would be unwise to recur to it, I say we must seek by other means, and in another direction, to place the cultivators of the soil in a fair and just position.

"Now, gentlemen, that is all I have ever said. It is what I am perfectly ready to maintain. I said it in Opposition as your member; and I say now, as a minister of the crown, I am perfectly prepared to advise Her Majesty to carry it out. Now, gentlemen, it has sometimes been said that the policy I wish to pursue has been but of limited compass—that it referred only to the burdens entailed upon land by our system of unfair taxation. Well, in the first place, if there are any particular burdens on one class which the rest of society do not bear, I say, as a matter of principle, that there ought to be redress. But I utterly deny

that at any time I have told you that proper measures of redress were solely or wholly to be got by any advantage which might arise from the adjustment of particular burdens entailed by local taxation. Three years ago, in this room, I advised you to take that particular grievance into your consideration, and to work it out, because your claim for redress was founded upon justice, and because justice would be sanctioned by the great body of the country. And what has happened since I thus advised you proves that my advice was a good one, for many gentlemen in the House of Commons, who did not represent agricultural constituencies, voted for the motions I brought forward on the subject, because they could not withhold their approval of what had the high sanction of national justice for its support. But, gentlemen, I have not told you—I do not tell you now—that this would give you a sufficient, or that this would give you the chief means of redress. I say no. It is in reviewing, it is in adjusting the whole system of national taxation, it is in placing this system upon a just basis, that the producer will find that justice which the consumer—which every fair and upright man—could wish him to secure.

"Gentlemen, the old question was simply this:—You said it required a system of legislation which would secure to you an artificial price. You were always taught to believe that in raising prices you would find redress; and in my opinion it would have been very wise, not materially to have destroyed the old system. But there is another view of the case—another view of your position—another means by which you may obtain redress—and a means more practical than recurring to the past, which is beset with infinite difficulties. It is not to increase prices in order that you may have a fair remuneration for your toil; but it is to reduce the cost of production (*immense cheering*).

"Now, that is the sound advice which the agricultural interest must act upon.

You are told that it is one of the necessities for the prosperous condition of England, that the bread of the people should be cheap. Well, I say, take care that the producer of that bread shall be able to produce it as cheap as possible. Now you will find if you adopt that view of the case, that you who are the occupiers of the soil will more gradually get the feeling of the country in your favour, and at the same time more perfectly secure compensation for yourselves. It is, as I have said, in reviewing the system of taxation which exists, and in the adjustment of that system, that the cultivators of the soil will find that compensation which they have a right to expect from the abrogation of that law which gave them artificial prices; and I say, in accordance with the spirit of the age and with the temper of the country, let your produce now be raised upon the cheapest possible principle. But then it follows, you must not allow your native produce to be shackled by laws which hinder the producer from competing with foreign countries. It follows that, in the new principle of justice, the cultivators of the soil shall no longer remain the only class incapable of receiving a fair profit for their industry. It follows, you must take care that the same justice be done to all Her Majesty's subjects. And I am well aware, gentlemen, if the question be viewed in that light, and if taxation shall certainly be placed upon a new principle, I am convinced we shall be able to bring forward measures of relief which will receive the sympathy, and approbation, and support of all the various classes of this country.

"Now, I am sometimes told that we supported in Opposition what is called the Protectionist policy, but have abandoned it in the responsible position of the ministers of the crown. Gentlemen, I should like to hear that accusation made in the House of Commons by any of my opponents. You know very well I have never been one of those who asserted that any sufficient

compensation for the abrogation of a law of protection could be fairly found in a moderate fixed duty upon corn. I have all along declared in my official position that I should be extremely glad, as a financial measure, if a moderate duty were agreed upon. It would bring an immense quota to the national revenue; and I think it is a very great mistake, so far as financial considerations are concerned, to suppose that a duty upon corn is a trifle; but it seems to be determined that we shall not raise any portion of the revenue from foreign grain. But suppose that a measure were passed—say a five shilling or a four shilling duty upon the importation of corn into this country; suppose this, and I ask will that place you in a position equal to that which you occupied in 1845? (*No! no! no!*) This would be a relief, gentlemen, I have never supported, and it would not by any means greatly contribute to place you in a just position. . . . Well, I say, gentlemen, it is in my opinion the duty of a government to redress the grievances under which the agriculturists have unjustly suffered. . . . I shall not, for the present, trouble you with the details of any measures we may present. We have been sometimes asked, ‘Why don’t you say what you will do?’ Why, gentlemen, we ought to go to the country upon principle, and not upon details. We say or think there should be measures brought forward to place the cultivators of the soil in a position to allow them to compete with foreign industry. That is the principle. We are not going to tell you what these measures of detail are. Ay or no, do you think it fair that English industry should be burdened? That is the question.”

He then concluded:—

“It is my firm conviction that the government of Lord Derby will meet parliament in the autumn with an absolute majority. To me that is not a subject of doubt. And the Ministry shall therefore no longer have to meet a hostile parliament, or be restrained in its policy by any over-

powering opposition. We shall meet parliament prepared to do our duty, under a firm conviction that the country will steadily protect us. I will not conceive the alternative; but, at the same time, no one can be blind to the fact, that the Opposition will create its organization upon revolutionary principles. Happy was the prescience of Lord Derby when he told the Whig Opposition that the pear was not ripe last year the Whigs were in office. They have shown us their character, and their policy has been received with universal scouting by the country: and they cannot, gentlemen, attain to popularity again except by calling to their counsels the Jacobin clubs of Lancashire.* But I feel, gentlemen, that the present government is necessary for the preservation of the English constitution; but the future institution of the Opposition already peeps from its shell and develops its horns, and from that shell the Opposition cannot emerge except enveloped in the slime of sedition. A change in the institutions of the country will be the condition of its success; and you must indeed be false to all your professions—false to that high spirit which Englishmen have ever shown—false to the traditional association of your country—if you suffer an Opposition founded upon such principles to govern this nation. Well, then, gentlemen, when we meet in the county hall, on Friday, I want to know if you will support the principles and practices which I have so feebly detailed? (Loud cries of *Yes! yes!*) Will you be prepared to say, ‘We shall have justice done to the soil; we shall have our legislation conceived in the spirit of the age, which is the spirit of justice?’ Will

* “The hon. member for Manchester (Mr. Bright) has complained that the chancellor of the exchequer has described that party as a Jacobin Club, and has asked the right hon. gentleman for a definition of a Jacobin Club. I think I can supply him with one. A Jacobin Club is an association that passes its resolutions outside the walls of parliament, and then attempts to force them on parliament by an appeal not to their reason but to their fears. A Jacobin Club is a body of men that presume to tell the legislature that unless their dictation is submitted to there shall be a war upon the institutions of the state.”—*Speech of Mr. Isaac Butt, House of Commons, November 26, 1852.*

you be prepared to say, ‘We will have the Protestant constitution of this country preserved, not with the sectarianism of bigots, but with those who believe that Protestantism is the only safeguard of English liberty?’ These, gentlemen, are the issues before you. Be prepared to fight against those difficulties and compunctions which an unwise and eccentric Opposition may create, and in the ancient spirit of the men of Buckinghamshire, which has conquered in times that are past, and which now, I believe, will carry us on to the higher triumph which yet awaits us.”

Three days after this speech was nomination day. The re-election of Mr. Disraeli was practically unopposed. Dr. Lee, of Hartwell House, put in his customary appearance, and received his customary support. In addition to Dr. Lee, the Whigs had entered the Hon. C. Cavendish for the contest; but as we shall see from the result, the constituency had no intention to oust their two Tory members from the House of Commons. When Mr. Disraeli stood forward to address his supporters he was greeted with loud cheers, and much waving of handkerchiefs from the fair sex, who had no little influence over the Conservative cause in Bucks.

In reply to taunts that his cabinet had done nothing since their accession to power, the chancellor of the exchequer carefully recapitulated the various measures which had been passed in the late session of parliament. “I have no wish, however,” said he, “to regain a renewal of confidence by an appeal only to the past. No vulgar sneers shall prevent me from following that path which I have chalked out for myself, or from attempting to fulfil those events which I feel are looming in the future. (A voice, “*What are they?*”) Well, you ask, so I’ll tell you. The first event looming in the future is that in a few days I shall be one of the members for Buckinghamshire” (*loud laughter*). He desired to have the renewal of their confidence, because it would assist him in carrying out, with the

aid of his colleagues, a policy which he believed would be most beneficial to the country. He had been taunted with the question of “Are you a free trader, or are you not?” He was almost surprised that the big and the little loaf had not put in an appearance. The time had gone by when those exploded politics could interest the people of that country. No one supposed that the present administration had any intention to bring back laws that were repealed in 1846. He disapproved of those laws, because he had always maintained that the English financial system was based upon a protective system, and that if they destroyed the protective system, they must reconsider the financial system, which was its creature. He was glad to find that even his opponents had come round to his opinions as to local taxation. Still he did not pretend to think that any adjustment of local taxation would give the redress that was necessary to the cultivator of the soil; nor did he think that in entering upon the question of taxation, they were to consider the interests of any one class alone, however respectable. He carried his views much further, and he looked with confidence to the moment when the government would bring forward measures which, from their wise and comprehensive character, would relieve every class in the country by the introduction into the system of taxation of principles more just and beneficial than those which had hitherto been its basis. He must defer to the fitting occasion and to the fitting place the details of the measures the cabinet were about to introduce.

“I am bound,” he said, “as a solicitor for your favours, to state to you the general tenor of the policy which I should recommend, and the great object of the policy I wish to achieve; but can anything be more preposterous or more ridiculous than that I should be called upon to explain to the electors of the county of Buckingham all the details of measures so vast, as they necessarily must be, embracing the interests of a great com-

munity like this?" He told them what was the spirit of the policy that animated the cabinet, and from the result of the general election he felt sure that the government would be permitted to bring forward those measures and carry them through parliament.

The number of electors on the register was between 5000 and 6000; at the close of the polling the result was as follows:—

Dupré,	1999
Disraeli,	1968
Cavendish,	1403
Lee,	665

Parliament met November 11, 1852, and the Houses were opened by the queen in person. The sanguine prophecies of Mr. Disraeli had, however, not been fulfilled; for though the contest had been close, it was estimated that the result of the elections had placed the government in a minority. The following list, compiled from careful sources, furnishes what may be considered an accurate statement as to the balance of parties in the new House of Commons:—

	Total Parl. lement.	Minis- terialists.	Opposi- tion.	Doubtful.
English Counties,	144	113	26	5
Welsh "	15	10	5	—
Scotch "	80	16	14	—
Irish "	64	24	40	—
English Cities and Boroughs, .	320	126	183	11
Welsh "	14	6	8	—
Scotch "	23	—	22	1
Irish "	89	18	25	1
Universities,	6	4	2	—
 St. Albans and Sudbury } (disfranchised),	658	312	325	18
Total,	659			
Double return,	1			
 House of Commons,	658			

Before the regular work of the session began, a sad but splendid act of homage had to be performed. Some few weeks before the assembling of parliament (September 14, 1852), the great Duke of Wellington had passed peacefully to his rest.

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He had lived so long before the public, his bent form clad in its frock coat and white trousers was so familiar an object in the Row and down Whitehall, warrior and minister he was so completely one of the institutions of the country, that it seemed almost impossible for the nation to exist without him. As soldier, as diplomatist, as statesman, as trusty counsellor, ever ready to do his "duty," his deeds, his advice, his rule, had filled so many pages of English history, that the blank created by his withdrawal from the scene of mortal labours was experienced by all; even those who only knew him by sight missed him, and felt as if a kind of bereavement had fallen upon them. Reading his history, we are sometimes compelled to reflect whether we are not after all entering upon the regions of fiction, so splendid are the triumphs of the great duke, so uninterrupted his successes, so dazzling the glory that attends upon his services. What commander either in ancient or modern history can compare with him? No matter in what country, or against what foe, he was uniformly successful. He was triumphant in India, in Portugal, in Spain, in France. None could resist his tactics, his subtle stratagems, his skill in marshalling the forces at his command. His men were ill-provisioned; he was hampered by conflicting orders; an irritable Opposition at home did all in its power to thwart his designs: yet what a list of glories he added to the annals of the British arms! Assaye, Argaum, Ahmednuggur, victories on the plains of India which crushed the insurrection of the Mahratta chieftains; Rorica, Vimiera, Busaco, victories which expelled the French from the valleys and mountains of Portugal; Talavera, Fuentes d'Onoro, Almeida, Badajoz, Ciudad Rodrigo, Salamanca, Vittoria, victories which forced the French to quit the Peninsula; the battles of the Pyrenees, Toulouse, and the crowning triumph of Waterloo, which exiled the "despot of Europe" to the lonely isle of St. Helena. No wonder that when the

splendid general returned to London he was the hero of the hour. Coriolanus was never more worshipped :—

“The matrons flung their gloves,
Ladies and maids their scarfs and handkerchiefs,
Upon him as he passed; the nobles bended
As to Jove's statue; and the commoners made
A shower of thunder with their cape and shouts.”

As in the history of warfare the successes of the famous soldier had been unique, so in the history of rewards were his honours unparalleled. Victory after victory raised him step by step in the ranks of the peerage. The battle of Talavera created him Baron Douro of Wellesley and Viscount Wellington of Talavera. On the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo he was raised to the dignity of an earl. After Salamanca he was created Marquis, and on his return to England he wore the strawberry leaves as Marquis of Douro and Duke of Wellington. Three times had he received the thanks of parliament—acknowledgments often accompanied by no mean grants from the crown. On taking his seat for the first time among his brother peers, the lord chancellor, after returning the thanks of the House for his Grace's “great and eminent services to his king and country,” thus addressed the noble warrior :—“I cannot forbear to call the especial attention of all who hear me to a fact in your Grace's life, singular, I believe, in the history of the country, and infinitely honourable to your Grace, that you have manifested upon your first entrance into this House your right under various grants to all the dignities in the peerage of this realm which the crown can confer. These dignities have been conferred at various periods, but in the short compass of little more than four years, for great public services occurring in rapid succession, claiming the favours of the crown.”

Few men are excellent in a double capacity, and the great duke was no exception to the rule. As a soldier, he was one of the most consummate generals that warfare has ever developed. As a statesman, he was not even in the second rank;

his prejudices narrowed his sense of judgment; he was too hasty in arriving at his conclusions, and he was often too unsympathetic and exclusive to interpret aright the feelings and wishes of his country. The two principles of his political creed were to maintain the English constitution as it was framed before the first Reform Bill, with all its unjust partialities and irritating restrictions, and to uphold the articles of the treaty of Vienna in their integrity. Yet he possessed advantages accorded to few statesmen, however eminent. He was the confidential adviser of the court; his opinion carried an enormous weight in the Upper House; and he was the honoured friend of every sovereign in Europe, and on terms of cordial intimacy with all the great foreign ministers. Thus he knew, from his personal acquaintance with the leaders of European diplomacy, what were the wishes and ambitions of every state in the family of nations. Almost to the very day of his death, when any important question was under consideration, the country was not fully satisfied until it became known “what the duke thought about it.”

“I was marvellously struck,” writes Charles Greville in his “Memoirs,” after a ride through St. James' Park with the Duke of Wellington, “with the profound respect with which the duke was treated, everybody we met taking off their hats to him, everybody in the park rising as he went by, and every appearance of his inspiring great reverence. I like this symptom, and it is the more remarkable because it is not *popularity*, but a much higher feeling towards him. He has forfeited his popularity more than once; he has taken a line in politics directly counter to the popular bias; but though in moments of excitement he is attacked and vilified, when the excitement subsides there is always a returning sentiment of admiration and respect for him, kept alive by the recollection of his splendid actions, such as no one else ever inspired.

Much, too, as I have regretted and censured the enormous errors of his political career (at times), I believe that this sentiment is in a great degree produced by the justice which is done to his political character, sometimes mistaken, but always high-minded and patriotic, and never mean, false, or selfish. If he has aimed at power and overrated his own capacity for wielding it, it has been with the purest intentions and the most conscientious views. I believe firmly that no man had ever at heart to a greater degree the honour and glory of his country; and hereafter, when justice will be done to his memory, and his character and conduct be scanned with impartial eyes, if his capacity for government appears unequal to the exigencies of the times in which he was placed at the head of affairs, the purity of his motives and the noble character of his ambition will be amply acknowledged. . . . He coveted power, but he was perfectly disinterested, a great patriot, if ever there was one; and he was always animated by a strong and abiding sense of duty."

At the opening of the Houses, Her Majesty alluded to the loss sustained by the nation in the following words inserted in the royal speech:—"I cannot meet you, for the first time after the dissolution of parliament, without expressing my deep sorrow, in which I am sure you will participate, that your deliberations can no longer be aided by the counsels of that illustrious man whose great achievements have exalted the name of England, and in whose loyalty and patriotism the interests of my throne and of my people ever found an unfailing support. I rely with confidence on your desire to join with me in taking such steps as may mark your sense of the irreparable loss which the country has sustained by the death of Arthur Duke of Wellington."

In the debate on the address to the throne the prime minister, before entering upon the details of public business, referred to the topic which was then occupying the thoughts of almost every man, not only in

England, but throughout the civilized world. "My lords," said Lord Derby, "it is impossible that we should assemble together in this house of parliament without remembering, as Her Majesty has been pleased in her speech to remember, the great loss we have sustained. As I rise to address your lordships, my eyes naturally turn to the head of this table, and looking at the seat to which a noble lord has so appropriately alluded, I miss there one whose venerable form occupied that place, and whose gray head, resting upon his hand, upraised to assist his imperfect hearing, was listening with conscientious and laborious attention to the arguments of even the humblest member that might be addressing your lordships. Again, my lords, I see him rising from his seat, and amid the breathless silence of the House, in homely phrase, addressing to your lordships the thoughts of a powerful mind, which seized intuitively the very pith and marrow of the matter. Slowly and deliberately he gave forth those pithy and sententious maxims which were the result of his intuitive sagacity, of his large and matured experience, of his deliberate wisdom. It is, indeed, upon no light theme that I now speak. When contemplating the character of him whose loss we now deplore, difficult indeed is the task to do justice to its greatness. His unparalleled achievements in the field, and all his actions, marked him the great leader; his sagacity in counsel, his loyalty to his sovereign, his deep devotion to the interests of his country, his noble self-reliance, his firmness and zeal, his abnegation of all selfish views in consideration of the interest of his country—my lords, all these great and high qualities have already been written in the undying page of history; all these are engraven on the hearts and minds of his countrymen; all these have been honoured by his sovereign; all these have been liberally acknowledged and confessed by the world. My lords, he is gone. He is gone where human honours are worthless. Yet, my

lords, history, while recording his many virtues, will not be unmindful of one great trait that shone through his entire character. In all the vicissitudes of his long career, in the battle-field, at the head of his troops, in the councils of statesmen, in the cabinet of his colleagues, in the chamber of his sovereign, in the assembled parliament, unbiassed by the blandishments of ambition, and unblinded by the blaze of his own transcendent glories, steadfastly refusing to listen to the aspirations of ambition, superior to all bias of political party, in every stage of his career, his actions were marked by a simplicity and singleness of purpose, the never-failing characteristic of every great mind."

A few days after passing this graceful tribute of respect and regret to the memory of the illustrious deceased, the prime minister again rose in the House of Lords to propose a resolution in reply to a message from Her Majesty respecting the funeral of the Duke of Wellington. Thursday, November 18, was the day fixed for the interment of the remains in St. Paul's cathedral; and a select committee was appointed to consider the arrangements, so as to facilitate the attendance of peers. Similar proceedings took place in the Lower House. As leader of the Commons, it fell to the duty of Mr. Disraeli to deliver the following brilliant funeral oration. We give it in full, since it has not been reprinted, and is only to be found in the pages of Hansard:—

"Sir, the House of Commons is called upon to-night to perform a sorrowful, but a noble duty. It has to recognize in the face of the country and of the civilized world the loss of the most distinguished of our citizens; and it has to offer to the ashes of the great departed the solemn anguish of a bereaved nation. Sir, the princely personage who has left us was born in an age more fruitful of great events than any other period of recorded time. Of its vast incidents, the most conspicuous were his own deeds—deeds achieved with the

smallest means and against the greatest obstacles. He was, therefore, not only a great man, but the greatest man of a great age. Amid the chaos and conflagration which attended the close of the last century, there arose one of those beings who seem to be born to master mankind. It is not too much to say that Napoleon combined the imperial ardour of Alexander with the strategy of Hannibal. The kings of the earth fell before his fury and subtle genius; and at the head of all the powers of Europe he denounced destruction against the only land that dared disobey him and be free. The providential superintendence of the world seems scarcely ever more manifest than when we recollect the dispensations of our day—that the same year which gave to France the Emperor Napoleon, produced also for us the Duke of Wellington; that in the same year they should have embraced the same profession; and that, natives of distant islands, they should both have repaired for their military education to that illustrious land which each in his turn was destined to subjugate. During that long struggle for our freedom, our glory—I might say for our existence—Wellesley fought and won fifteen pitched battles—all of them of the highest class—concluding with one of those crowning victories that give a colour and a form to history. During this period, that can be said of him which can be said of no other captain—that he captured 3000 cannon from the enemy, and never lost a single gun.

"But the greatness of his exploits was, perhaps, even surpassed by the difficulties which he had to encounter. For he had to encounter a feeble Government, a factious Opposition, a distrustful people, scandalous allies, and the most powerful enemy in the world. He won victories with starving troops, and he carried on sieges without munitions. And as if to complete the fatality which attended him throughout life in this respect, when he had at last succeeded in creating an army worthy of the Roman legions and worthy of himself,

this invincible host was broken up on the eve of the greatest conjuncture of his life, and he had to enter the field of Waterloo with raw levies and discomfited allies. But the star of Wellington never paled. He has been called fortunate; but fortune is a divinity which has ever favoured those who are at the same time sagacious and intrepid, inventive and patient. It was his own character that created his career—alike achieved his exploits and guarded him from every vicissitude; for it was his sublime self-control alone that regulated his lofty fate.

"Sir, it has been of late years somewhat the fashion to disparage the military character. Forty years of peace have, perhaps, made us somewhat less aware how considerable and how complex are the qualities which go to the formation of a great general. It is not enough that he must be an engineer, a geographer, learned in human nature and adroit in managing men: he must also be able to fulfil the highest duty of a minister of state, and then to descend to the humblest office of a commissary and a clerk; but he has to display all this knowledge and to exercise all those duties at the same time, and under extraordinary circumstances. At every moment he has to think of the eve and the morrow—of his flank and of his rear—he has to calculate at the same time the state of the weather and the moral qualities of men; and all those elements that are perpetually changing he has to combine, sometimes under overwhelming heat, sometimes under overpowering cold—oftentimes in famine, and frequently amidst the roar of artillery. Behind all these circumstances there is ever present the image of his country, and the dreadful alternative whether that country is to welcome him with laurels or with cypress. Yet those images he must dismiss from his mind, for the general must not only think, but think with the rapidity of lightning; for on a moment more or less depends the fate of the most beautiful combination, and a moment more or less is a question of glory or of shame. Unquestionably, sir, all this

may be done in an ordinary manner, by an ordinary man, as every day of our lives we see that ordinary men may be successful ministers of state, successful authors, and successful speakers; but to do all this with genius is sublime. Doubtless to be able to think with vigour, with depth, and with clearness in the recess of the cabinet is a fine intellectual demonstration; but to think with equal vigour, clearness, and depth amidst the noise of bullets, appears the loftiest exercise and the most complete triumph of the human faculties.*

"Sir, when we take into consideration the prolonged and illustrious life of the Duke of Wellington, we are surprised how small a section of that life is occupied by that military career which fills so large a

* The critics of Mr. Disraeli, always on the look out to detect faults, found that this eloquent passage was plagiarized from an article written, so early as the year 1829, by, it was alleged, M. Thiers in the *Revue Trimestre*, on Marshal Gouvion de St. Cyr.

"An engineer," writes M. Thiers on the gifts requisite to make a great general, "a geographer, a man of the world, metaphysician, knowing men, knowing how to govern them, an administrator in great things, a clerk in small—all these things it is necessary to be, but these are as yet nothing. All this vast knowledge must be exercised on the instant, in the midst of extraordinary circumstances. At every moment you must think of the yesterday and the morrow; of your flank and of your rear; calculate at the same time on the atmosphere and on the temper of your men; and all these elements, so various and so diverse, which are ceaselessly changing and renewed, you must combine in the midst of cold, heat, hunger, bullets. . . . Farther off, and behind them, is the spectacle of your country, with laurel or with cypress. But all these images and ideas must be banished and set aside, for you must think, and think quickly—one minute too much, and the fairest combination has lost its opportunity, and instead of glory, it is shame that awaits you. All this undoubtedly is compatible with mediocrity, like every other profession; one can also be a middling poet, a middling orator, a middling author; but this done with genius is sublime. . . . To think in the quiet of one's cabinet, clearly, strongly, nobly, this undoubtedly is great; but to think as clearly, as strongly, as nobly, in the midst of carnage and fire, is the most perfect exercise of the human faculties." In extenuation it was said that Mr. Disraeli had read the article many years ago, had been much struck by it, and had committed some of the passages to memory. "All this is very natural," wrote the *Times*, who came to the defence of the attacked orator. "But why did not Mr. Disraeli give the name of the author? We believe it is not known. The passage is from an anonymous article in a review, probably, but not avowedly, by M. Thiers. To give the name of an authority is always difficult in a speech; much more so when it is a review or other periodical. But the fair account of the matter is that Mr. Disraeli found himself in the passage before he had time to affix the proper title-page, introduction, and table of contents. It is one of the evils of a well-stored memory that a man cannot help quoting; but nothing destroys the interest of a speech, and the confidence of the hearers, so much as avowed quotations."

space in history. Only eight years elapsed from Vimiera to Waterloo, and from the date of his first commission to the last cannon shot which he heard on the field of battle scarce twenty years can be counted. After all his triumphs, he was destined for another career; and the greatest and most successful of warriors—if not in the prime, at least in the perfection of manhood—commenced a civil career scarcely less successful, scarcely less splendid, than that military one which will live for ever in the memory of man. He was thrice the ambassador of his sovereign at those great historic congresses that settled the affairs of Europe; twice was he secretary of state; twice he was commander-in-chief of the forces; once he was prime minister of England; and to the last hour of his life he may be said to have laboured for his country. It was only a few months before we lost him that he favoured with his counsel and assistance the present advisers of the crown respecting that war in the East of which no one could be so competent to judge, and he drew up his views on that subject in a state paper characterized by all his sagacity and experience; and indeed when he died, he died still the active chief-tain of that famous army to which he has left the tradition of his glory.

“Sir, there is one passage in the life of the Duke of Wellington which in this place and on this occasion I ought not to let pass unnoticed. It is our pride that he was one of ourselves: it is our glory that Sir Arthur Wellesley once sat on these benches. If we view his career in the House of Commons by the tests of success which are applied to common men, his career, although brief, was still distinguished. He entered the royal councils, and filled high offices of state. But the success of Sir Arthur Wellesley in the House of Commons must not be tested by the fact that he was a privy councillor or a secretary of a lord-lieutenant. He achieved here a success which the greatest ministers and the most brilliant orators may never hope to accom-

plish. That was a great parliamentary triumph when he rose in his place to receive the thanks of Mr. Speaker for a brilliant victory; and later still when at that bar to receive, sir, from one of your predecessors, in memorable words, the thanks of a gratified senate for accumulated triumphs.

“Sir, there is one source of consolation which, I think, the people of England possess at this moment under the severe bereavement over which they mourn. It is their intimate acquaintance with the character and even the person of this great man. There never was a man of such mark, who lived so long and so much in the public eye. I will be bound there is not a gentleman in the House who has not seen him; many there are who have conversed with him; some there are who have touched his hand. His image, his countenance, his manner, his voice, are impressed on every memory and sound almost in every ear. In the gilded saloon and in the busy market-place, to the last, he might be found. The rising generation among whom he lived will often recall his words of kindness; and the people followed him in the street with that lingering gaze of reverend admiration which seemed never to tire. Who, indeed, can ever forget that venerable and classic head, ripe with time, and radiant as it were with glory—

“‘*Stilichonis apex et cognita fulsit
Canities?*’

“To complete all, that we might have a perfect idea of his inward and spiritual nature, that we might understand how this sovereign master of duty fulfilled the manifold offices of his life with unrivalled activity; he himself gave us a collection of military and administrative literature which no age and no country can rival. And fortunate in all things, Wellington found in his lifetime an historian whose immortal page now ranks with the classics of that land which Wellesley saved.

“Sir, the Duke of Wellington has left to his country a great legacy—greater even

than his fame; he has left to them the contemplation of his character. I will not say of England that he has revived here the sense of duty; that, I trust, was never lost. But that he has inspired public life with a purer and more masculine tone I cannot doubt; that he has rebuked by his career restless vanity, and regulated the morbid susceptibility of irregular egotism, is, I think, no exaggerated praise. I do not believe that among all orders of Englishmen, from the highest to the lowest—from those who are called on to incur the most serious responsibilities of office, to those who exercise the humblest duties of our society—I do not believe there is one among us who may not experience moments of doubt and depression when the image of Wellington will occur to his memory, and he find in his example support and solace.

"Although the Duke of Wellington lived so much in the mind and heart of the people of England—although at the end of his long career he occupied such a prominent position, and filled such august offices—no one seemed to be conscious of what a space he occupied in the thoughts and feelings of his countrymen until he died. The influence of true greatness was never, perhaps, more completely asserted than in his decease. In an age in which the belief in intellectual equality flatters so much our self-complacency, every one suddenly acknowledges that the world has lost its foremost man. In an age of utility, the most busy and the most common-sense people in the world find no vent for their woe, and no representation for their sorrow, but the solemnity of a pageant; and we, who are assembled here for purposes so different, to investigate the sources of the wealth of nations, to busy ourselves in statistical research, to encounter each other in fiscal controversy, we offer to the world the most sublime and touching spectacle that human circumstances can well produce—the spectacle of a senate mourning a hero."

The public funeral was not only the most splendid that England has ever accorded to

any of her famous sons, but the most impressive. Every shop throughout the kingdom was closed; in all our great cities business was suspended, and there were none so poor or so lowly in condition as not to deck themselves here and there with bits of crape, out of compliment to the mighty warrior who had burnished the arms of his country with a glory they had not reflected since the days of Marlborough. As the coffin passed through the crowded streets, every head was uncovered; not a jest, not a sneer, no repulsive horse-play broke upon the sorrows of the hour and marred the harmony of reverential grief. Gorgeous as was the funeral pageant with its sable trappings, its long line of private carriages, its host of distinguished mourners, yet the most impressive tribute to the memory of the great duke was the decorous, the orderly, the respectful behaviour of the millions that, coming from all parts of the country, then thronged the streets of London. In describing the events of that memorable day to his brother peers, Lord Derby took the opportunity of alluding to the good conduct on that occasion of so vast a crowd.

"When," he said, "we consider how large a proportion of the population of these United Kingdoms was for that single day crowded together in the streets of the metropolis—when you remember, as those at least remember to whose lot it fell to take part in the procession, and who saw it throughout its whole length and breadth—when you remember that on a line of route three miles in length, extending from Grosvenor Place to St. Paul's Cathedral, there was not a single unoccupied foot of ground, and that you passed through a living sea of faces, all turned to look upon that great spectacle—when you saw every house, every window, every housetop, loaded with persons anxious to pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of England's greatest son—when you saw those persons (those, at least, within the streets) remaining with entire

and unflinching patience for many hours in a position in which movement was hardly possible, and yet that scarce a single accident occurred to the most feeble woman or child amid that vast mass—when, throughout the whole of that length, not only was a perfect decorum preserved, and a perfect and ready assistance given to the efforts of the police and the military, but there was no unseemly desire to witness the magnificent spectacle, no light and thoughtless applause at the splendour of that spectacle, and that the people of England, in the awful silence of those vast crowds, testified in the most emphatic manner the sense in which every man among them felt the public loss which England had sustained—I know not, my lords, how you may have looked upon this manifestation of public feeling and good sense and order; but I know this, that as I passed along those lines it was with pride and satisfaction I felt that I was a countryman of those who knew so well how to regulate and control themselves; and I could not help entertaining a hope that those foreign visitors who have done us and themselves the honour of assisting at this great ceremonial might upon this occasion, as upon the 1st of May, 1851,* bear witness back to their own country how safely and to what extent a people might be relied upon in whom the strongest hold of their government was their own reverence and respect for the free institutions of their country, and the principles of popular self-government controlled and modified by constitutional monarchy.

"And who will forget," continued Lord Derby, "the effect within the cathedral? When, amidst solemn and mournful music, slowly, and inch by inch, the coffin which held the illustrious dead descended into its last long resting-place, I was near enough to see the countenances of many of the veterans who were companions of his labours and of his triumphs, and was near enough to hear the suppressed sobs

and see the hardly-checked tears, which would not have disgraced the cheeks of England's greatest warriors, as they looked down for the last time upon all that was mortal of our mighty hero. Honour, my lords, to the people who so well know how to reverence the illustrious dead!

"Honour to the friendly visitors—especially to France, the great and friendly nation that testified by the presence of their representative their respect and veneration for his memory! They had regarded him as a foe worthy of their steel. His object was not fame nor glory, but a lasting peace. We have buried in our greatest hero the man among us who had the greatest horror of war. The great object of this country is to maintain peace. To do that, however, a nation must possess the means of self-defence. I trust that we shall bear this in mind, not in words only, but in our actions and policy, setting aside all political and party considerations, and that we shall concur in this opinion—that, in order to be peaceful, England must be powerful; but that, if England ought to be powerful, she ought to be so only in order that she should be more secure of peace."

"O friends, our chief state oracle is mute :
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good gray head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds that
blew!
Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be seen no
more." †

† "Ode on the death of the Duke of Wellington," by Alfred Tennyson.

* The date of the opening of the Great Exhibition.

CHAPTER IX.

"UNRESTRICTED COMPETITION."

SHORTLY after the assembling of parliament it was very evident that the Opposition were resolved to have the question which had been so much discussed during the recent elections, as to the conduct of the government towards the principles of free trade, fully and fairly settled. Scarcely had Mr. Disraeli re-seated himself upon the Treasury bench than the agitation began to exhibit itself in the debate on the address. Were the government about to abandon free trade and support Protection, or were they desirous of upholding free trade and renouncing Protection? These were the questions put forward. The paragraph in the queen's speech as to the future commercial policy of the Conservative party was, in the opinion of the Opposition, vague and unintelligible.* It might mean something, and it might mean nothing; it "had been dictated," they said, "by the genius of rigmarole, and traced by the hand of mystification." Why could not ministers, they asked, write plain English? What was the interpretation to be put upon that curious expression "recent legislation?" If the working classes were well off, what was the meaning of the statement that something required to be done to relieve the injury inflicted upon the industry of the country? The paragraph, the Opposition said, was studiously evasive and deceptive. If the policy of free trade were

* "It gives me pleasure," said Her Majesty, "to be enabled, by the blessing of Providence, to congratulate you on the generally improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes. If you should be of opinion that recent legislation, in contributing with other causes to this happy result, has at the same time inflicted unavoidable injury on certain important interests, I recommend you dispassionately to consider how far it may be practicable equitably to mitigate that injury, and to enable the industry of the country to meet successfully that unrestricted competition to which parliament, in its wisdom, has decided that it should be subjected."

not to be reversed, why had it not been distinctly avowed in the speech from the throne? Why did not Mr. Disraeli, who had screwed up his courage to many points, take his physic like a man? why did he make so many gulps in swallowing this free-trade potion? "Why," asked Mr. Ber-
nal Osborne, "did the right hon. gentleman, who was the genius and soul of his cabinet, condescend to be tied together with a bundle of incompetent marquesses and men who were at least questionable as to their principles, however honourable they might be in other respects? Why did he not say, 'I am a free trader; I hunted Sir Robert Peel to his grave; I maligned Sir Robert Peel; but I see that I committed a grievous error, and I am now a free trader?'" *Punch* represented the chancellor of the exchequer as a timid, shivering, little boy standing on the steps of a bathing machine, whilst Mr. Cobden, caricatured as a bathing woman wading through the sea of free trade, was employing all his wiles to make the child of Protection plunge in.

These questions were now to receive a definite answer. In pursuance of notice Mr. Villiers rose (November 23, 1852) to move the following resolutions:—

"That it is the opinion of this House that the improved condition of the country, and particularly of the industrious classes, is mainly the result of recent commercial legislation, and especially of the Act of 1846, which established the free admission of foreign corn, and that the Act was a wise, just, and beneficial measure.

"That it is the opinion of this House that the maintenance and further extension of the policy of free trade, as opposed to that of Protection, will best enable the prop-

erty and industry of the nation to bear the burthens to which they are exposed, and will most contribute to the general prosperity, welfare, and contentment of the people.

"That this House is ready to take into its consideration any measures consistent with the principles of these resolutions, which may be laid before it by Her Majesty's ministers."

Upon these resolutions a long and weighty debate took place. Mr. Villiers, as the mover of the motion, was naturally the first to open fire. He considered it most important that the House of Commons should come to some positive declaration on the great question at issue. He declined to wait until the chancellor of the exchequer had introduced his financial statement. He wished to know at once what was the commercial policy of the present cabinet. Lord Derby had consented to be tried by his country, and that statement was sufficient to justify the motion being brought forward. The prime minister had been tried, and the verdict had gone against him. "Certainly," says Lord Derby, "you differ from me in this matter; but if you only give me a little time I have got a colleague so fertile in his resources, and of such transcendent abilities, that he will soon prepare a substitute for you—something that you will be delighted with—something that, if he only is permitted to produce it, is sure to be satisfactory to all parties." He, Mr. Villiers, did not deny that that was possible; there were geniuses of that kind, particularly in connection with medicine, who discovered remedies for every sore which the flesh was heir to. Mr. Disraeli could no doubt prepare measures which would be universally palatable if he had only plenty of time to produce them; but time pressed, and delay was dangerous.

Nor had these resolutions been proposed with any factious object of overthrowing the government. "I myself," said Mr. Villiers, "am not disposed to attach so much importance to the existence of a ministry as some people are. I

have seen four or five ministries in office since I have been in parliament; and so far as I have been able to judge, there has been a strong family likeness between them all. The country never suffers very much from any of them; those who accede to power generally do that which they resisted in Opposition, which is pretty much what their predecessors did before them. My own impression is that no great genius is required to administer a government. I believe that all the real business in the public offices is done by a certain number of public servants—able and valuable men—of whom we hear very little, and that it must be owing to some lack of judgment, or some want of capacity, whenever a government becomes sufficiently unpopular to be displaced. That I may not be misunderstood, however, I beg again to state that in making this motion I have no object of displacing the ministry." Still, he far from approved of the tactics of the government. Ministers had dissolved the last parliament, the verdict of the country had gone against them, and they "bowed," as they called it, to the national judgment.

"Certainly," sneered Mr. Villiers, "I must say that a more convenient course for a party I never heard of, than that of dissolving parliament to obtain a verdict from public opinion as to whether they are right or wrong, and the adoption of such course afterwards. One cannot but be amused at it. To use a rather vulgar metaphor, it is merely 'Heads I win, tails you lose.' If Protection succeeds, so much the better; we are all right. If free trade is successful, we 'bow' to the verdict of the country; but at all events we remain in." The member for Wolverhampton then entered into statistics to prove how beneficial free-trade measures had been, not only to the operatives in the manufacturing towns, but also to agricultural labourers and tenant-farmers. It was perfectly true, he said, that farmers had very distinct grievances; there were the law of distress, the law of settlement, compensation for unexhausted improve-

ments and the game laws; but these, he asserted, were distinct from Protection. He admitted that the farmers had been a very ill-used class, but in his opinion their distress had been made capital of by the Conservatives for party ends. For the sake of the agricultural as well as the manufacturing interest, therefore, he desired to know what the commercial policy of the country was to be. "I do hope," concluded Mr. Villiers, "that the right hon. gentleman, the chancellor of the exchequer, will not attempt to evade this real question by talking of factiousness, or by impugning my personal motives; but that he will address himself in a straightforward way to the question before the House, and that he will not sit down without letting us at last know what he does really mean. Already enormous mischief has been done by the course taken by the hon. gentleman opposite ever since 1846."

Thus appealed to, Mr. Disraeli at once rose to reply. He considered the speech of Mr. Villiers not appropriate to the occasion. Parliament had met, not to decide whether the corn laws or sugar duties should be repealed, but whether ministers, by their conduct since their accession to office, had fulfilled the pledges they gave both to the legislature and the country; and whether, having announced that they would defer their own opinion to that of the nation on a subject of great importance, the government had frankly or otherwise communicated to the Houses the resolution at which they had arrived. Mr. Villiers had said that "enormous mischief" had been done to the country by the course which had been pursued by the Protectionist party since 1846. If such a statement were true, he, the chancellor of the exchequer, was far from wishing to escape from the issue before them; on the contrary, it was his opinion that it was the duty of the House of Commons, if that charge should be proved, to express, in a manner which could not be mistaken, that parliament had no confidence in men who had perpetrated "enormous

mischief." Under the circumstances, he therefore trusted, said Mr. Disraeli, that the House would allow him, in a calm and dispassionate manner, to trace the conduct of the Protectionists since the period to which Mr. Villiers had referred. He hoped that the Chamber would permit him to place before it, in an impartial and accurate statement, the principal parliamentary incidents which had occurred during the last four or five years, in so far as they related to that great question of free trade. He felt it his duty, not only to the government, but to parliament and the country, to enter upon these details, and he was sure that after his explanation the House would draw a very different inference of the conduct of the Protectionist party from that deduced by Mr. Villiers.

Let him, therefore, at the outset, proceeded Mr. Disraeli, state in a manner that could not be misapprehended, the principal reasons on which the Protectionists opposed the repeal of the corn laws as proposed by the late Sir Robert Peel. They had objected to that change on two broad and distinct grounds. The main ground was, that they believed it a change which would prove injurious to the interests of labour. That was the chief and principal ground on which he had individually placed his own opposition to it. Was it or was it not the cause of labour? That was the ground of the opposition of the Protectionists as a party to the repeal. The second reason of their objection was, that the repeal of the corn laws would occasion injury to considerable interests in the country. On a subsequent occasion, in 1850, when the matter had been incidentally referred to in the House, he himself, continued Mr. Disraeli, had used the expression with reference to the corn laws, that it was a question of labour, or it was nothing. After the repeal of the corn laws, there were two other great measures connected with that system of commercial policy, which was popularly, but very indefinitely described by the name of free trade, which

were proposed and carried. The minister who proposed the repeal of the corn laws and carried it was dismissed from office, and was succeeded by another statesman, who proposed the repeal of the sugar laws; but that proposition for the repeal of the sugar laws was not approved by the minister who repealed the corn laws. He mentioned the circumstance, because the question had always been argued as if from the beginning there had been two great parties in the House—the one banded together to carry what was called free trade in all the great articles of popular consumption, and the other marshalled for the purpose of opposing that policy. Shortly after the repeal of the sugar duties was carried parliament was dissolved; a new parliament assembled, under the management of Lord John Russell, and after considerable delay and hesitation another great measure, the repeal of the navigation laws, was proposed and carried. Then there commenced in due time the complaints of three great interests—the agricultural, the colonial, and the shipping interests. He might fairly say that the five years which elapsed, between the election of 1847 and the recent dissolution, were mainly engaged in discussions, or in legislation upon the agricultural, the colonial, and the shipping distress.

Now, continued Mr. Disraeli, let him put this fact before the House—it was a fact which might be convenient for certain members to forget—that from the time that the repeal of the corn laws was passed until the present moment, not a single attempt had been made in the House of Commons to abrogate the measure of 1846. Yes, and in spite of the interruptions with which that statement had just been received, he repeated it—he repeated it on behalf of that party which had perpetrated “enormous mischiefs”—that from the moment the corn laws were repealed until the present date, not a single motion had ever been made in the House of Commons to bring back that Protection which had been so unfeebly attacked by Mr. Villiers.

“Now, sir,” said Mr. Disraeli in explanation of the conduct of his party, “let me ask what was the reason we did not bring forward a motion to question the policy of the Act of 1846, which up to that time we had consistently and honourably opposed? It was because we had laid it down from the first as a great principle that the fate of that proposition depended not on the injury it might inflict on any particular interest in the country, but on the way in which it should affect the condition of the working classes; and there being no facts before us of a sufficiently large character to convince us that the condition of the working classes had been injured by the act of 1846, we did not think it our duty to make any motion, when in Opposition, which questioned the policy of the law. Well now, sir, let me remind the House what was our conduct with respect to the other two branches of this great question. Did we—did the party who are said to have perpetrated ‘enormous mischiefs’—did we, on the subject of the sugar laws, act in that factious spirit which has been described by the hon. and learned gentleman [Mr. Villiers] who is himself so susceptible with regard to imputations of factious conduct?” Mr. Disraeli then stated that with respect to the sugar laws all that the Protectionists had done was to confine their exertions to a calm and elaborate investigation of facts, through a committee of which out of the fifteen members constituting it only three were Protectionists, and that the result of the investigation was to cause the Conservatives who were then in Opposition materially to influence the policy of the minister of the day.* The conduct of the Protectionists had been the same towards the navigation laws; they had opposed the repeal, but never had they once attempted

* Owing to the statements of this committee Lord John Russell was compelled to admit that his legislation on the subject of the sugar duties had been “rash and hasty,” and he therefore begged leave to introduce immediately a bill to suspend the change of duty, and to prolong the Protection which he himself had taken away.

to abrogate the decision of the House. On what grounds was the charge, then, sustained that since 1846 the Protectionists had been guilty of "enormous mischief?"

Mr. Disraeli next proceeded to give a history of the efforts of his followers since the repeal of the laws relating to the three great measures he had alluded to. On the general election of 1847 taking place, the organization of political parties had been entirely broken up; very high prices for all kinds of farm produce, from peculiar circumstances, then existed; and the opinions which influenced the constituent body on that occasion could hardly be said to have had any reference to the merits or the principles of recent legislation. A large Protectionist party had, indeed, been returned to that House from a feeling which always animated great bodies of people in the country, who thought they owed sympathy or gratitude to those who had fought their battles or carried their colours. Still, it was very well known that at the election of 1847 the economical controversy was not at all entered into, at least by the farmers. The farmers were then, said Mr. Disraeli, receiving high prices, and political parties were in a state of disorganization; and although a large party had been returned to the House in favour of the agricultural interest, the fact was that no pressure from that interest, or from any of the cultivators of the soil, was made to induce their advocates in that House to bring forward their complaints.

However, in 1850 the pinch which the Conservatives had foreseen not only commenced, but was in acute operation. What was now the conduct of the party which had perpetrated "enormous mischief?" The Protectionists were then appealed to by their constituents, who loudly complained of the great losses and sufferings they endured. What was the course the Conservative party took? Did they come forward and demand the restoration of Protection? On the contrary, they said they opposed the repeal of the corn laws

on two grounds—it was injurious to labour and to the growers of corn. Still, as they were not satisfied that the interests of labour had been injured by the change, they could not lend themselves to the cry of the farmer, and demand the restoration of Protection solely on his account. However, they said this to the agricultural interest, "If you find your sufferings acute, if you find your distress is intolerable, if you find the cost of production not remunerated by your returns, we will consider your position with reference to taxation; and if we can relieve you of burdens which others are not subject to, or by any other means equally justifiable give you relief, we will do our duty to you in the House of Commons, and we will endeavour to obtain you that relief." In pursuance of that advice and at the request of his friends, he, Mr. Disraeli, brought forward in that House a motion of a remedial nature, which received, if not the sanction of the House, at least undoubtedly considerable sympathy.

Now, in 1851, a change of government very unexpectedly took place. In 1851, at the first moment the House met, continued Mr. Disraeli, he gave notice of a motion the object of which was to relieve the cultivators of the soil from the pressure of certain local taxation—not a measure to restore Protection, not a measure to question the policy of the repeal of the corn laws, but a measure brought forward with a distinct disclaimer on his own part of any wish to enter upon that question, and with a statement that he thought it most unwise to make that controversy one of public discussion in the House of Commons, and that any recurrence to the system which had been abrogated could only be justified by the overwhelming opinion of the country. He brought forward that remedial motion with regard to agriculture which was, he thought, lost in that House only by a majority of ten votes. He might say that the division upon that question displaced the govern-

ment from their seats, for although ministers did not resign office upon that point, yet on finding themselves a few days afterwards upon another subject in a minority they felt it their duty to resign; and Lord John Russell subsequently confessed that it was the division upon Mr. Disraeli's motion which had mainly decided the opinion of the government as to giving up office.

Lord Derby then came into power. "Now look to the position of Lord Derby at that moment," said Mr. Disraeli. "He was at the head of a party in parliament, one principle of whose conduct was, that it was unwise to disturb the repeal of the corn laws which had taken place in 1846, unless called for by the nation in an unmistakable manner. He had recommended that course while there was a most powerful party in the country discontented with the advice which he gave; and are hon. gentlemen to be surprised that there should be a strong party in this country favourable to what they call Protection, notwithstanding the course which we might feel it our duty to take in either house of parliament? We must remember that the farmers of England, according to the statement of the hon. and learned member for Wolverhampton, had at that very time lost upwards of £90,000,000 in one year. Well it might be perfectly wise, just, and beneficial that a body of English producers should lose more than £90,000,000 in a single year; but this I will venture to say, with great deference to all those lights of political economy whom I see opposite, that you may rely upon it that so long as human nature remains what it is, a large body of producers will not lose millions without feeling very much discontented at the legislation which has caused such loss, and without challenging the justice of the legislation of which they are victims. But you had something more than this; you had the great colonial interests of this country in a state of absolute ruin, and, in addition, you had the great shipping

interest subjected to unrestricted competition by a minister (Lord John Russell) who at the same time did not remove those burdens and restrictions which, only six months ago, he told the greatest commercial constituency in the world absolutely impeded its prosperity. Are you surprised, then, that there should be an important party—a party that, from their numbers and their great and ramified interests, may be fairly called a national party—who were discontented with the recent legislation to which I have alluded? Lord Derby, however, had made up his mind that nothing could justify a return to the abrogated system, unless the labouring classes were largely and permanently suffering.

"What, then, was the conduct of Lord Derby in 1851? He was called upon unexpectedly to form a government. He had to announce a policy which, while it showed sympathy with those great classes in the country, the sufferings of which are always proved by hon. gentlemen opposite, would be consistent with the principle he had laid down for his government, that they should not disturb the existing laws unless the working classes were suffering from their adoption. The programme of Lord Derby was one of compromise and of conciliation. How moderate it was I will show by recalling it to the consideration of the House. In 1851 did Lord Derby come forward and say, 'We must return to the sliding scale of 1846?' On the contrary, he said, 'I will propose, as regards the agricultural interest now suffering so much, that we shall have a countervailing duty, such as has been approved of by men of the highest character and authority upon such subjects. You acknowledge the agricultural interest is subject to certain peculiar burdens as regards taxation, and to certain restrictions as regards their industry. Well, I open books of great authority on political economy, and they tell me that a countervailing duty is the legitimate compensation under such circumstances.'" Therefore, in 1851, a mode-

rate countervailing duty had been the proposition of Lord Derby, and not an attempt to disturb the settlement of 1846. Mr. Disraeli now proceeded to show how Lord Derby acted towards the sugar duties and the shipping interest. With regard to the sugar duties, "all Lord Derby proposed was, that the descending scale of duties should be arrested, and that only for a time, while the colonies were suffering from the great trial through which they were passing." As to the re-establishment of the abrogated navigation laws, the prime minister had declared "that any recurrence in that respect would be impossible." Where, then, was the "enormous mischief" perpetrated by the Protectionist party?

Mr. Disraeli then began to state the reasons, already given in another part of this history, why the government had not immediately dissolved parliament on their taking office; he also sketched the utility of the measures the ministers had passed since their accession to power. He next proved, by extracts from the speeches of certain of the Peelite party, that that section of the Opposition had held very much the same views as to the mitigation of agricultural and colonial distress as had the Protectionists, and hence were equally guilty, if any were guilty, of having committed "enormous mischief" during the last five years. Therefore, on account of those reasons, he could not vote for the resolution of Mr. Villiers, which appeared indirectly to cast reflections upon the past policy of the Protectionists.

"I cannot agree to his resolution," said the chancellor of the exchequer, "and I will give you, if you will let me, the reasons why I cannot do so. I have to-night put before the House the case of the government; and if I have seemed to trench on the patience of the House, I hope they will be generous enough to remember that they sit in the character of a jury to-night; that in speaking to them I am appealing to opinion which will decide more important things than the fate of a government. It

is, therefore, fitting that whatever may be the decision of the House I should have an opportunity of putting the government in a right position, and especially with reference to parties who are, we are told, banded together to overturn it. I have shown the House that from the beginning we resolved never to attempt to repeal any of those three measures; that under no circumstances did we think the country could retrace its steps unless the condition of the working classes became permanently worse; that during all this time there was a strong and most suffering party out of the House—a party whose sufferings were not only acknowledged by statements made by ministers, but sympathized with by our sovereign. And we are told that we were not to encourage those men under all their distresses, suffering, as they believed, from the desertion of their natural leaders: that we were not to secure for them at least the constitutional appeal which, if they did not labour under misapprehension, would, they believed, give them the means of redressing their grievances. I wish to bring in no external causes for the course we took; but I can only say, as one returned to this House by my constituents, that I cannot comprehend the feelings which should have induced me to desert them in their hour of trial. Difficult as was the position in which we were placed with their suffering interests, that position was immensely aggravated when the chief minister of the Crown was frequently recommending the sovereign either to acknowledge those sufferings or bringing in measures of partial and temporary relief. How could you expect that these interests would believe your laws conclusive, when from the throne you seemed to regret their consequences, and were constantly meddling with the legislation you had yourselves proposed? I have shown the House that, acting on these two principles, we determined first that we should not disturb that legislation unless the working classes were permanently suffering; secondly, that we would by

remedial legislation mitigate as much as possible any just claims for relief placed before us—claims which I have shown that the leaders of almost all parties have attempted to alleviate."

Mr. Disraeli next discussed the question of the dissolving of parliament. The government had resolved to appeal to the country and abide by its verdict, whether Protection or free trade was to be the commercial policy of the future. What had been the consequence of the line they had taken? The consequence had been that the Protectionists, having had a fair trial, having gone through a fair contest, and having been beaten, were not ashamed to acknowledge their discomfiture. If they had not had that opportunity there would have been for years a parliamentary party in the country, and in that House, who would have believed in the possibility of carrying out a Protectionist system of policy; and whenever a period of suffering, arising from any of those vicissitudes which would periodically occur, should have happened, the distress would have been attributed to the policy the Liberals were so anxious to support.

"Well, sir," proceeded Mr. Disraeli, "having after the general election considered the verdict of the country, Her Majesty's government felt they had but one course to take—frankly to accept and unreservedly to act upon it. But I am told that we have not done that. I am told that the language of the queen's speech from the throne was not satisfactory. Why, certainly, we did not think it our duty to recommend Her Majesty to speak like a partisan. There ought to be a certain degree of reserve in the language to be used by the Crown under any circumstances. The speech from the throne is always recommended by the advisers of the Crown; but still it is the speech of the sovereign, and the sovereign might be called—even on the morrow—to use different language for a different purpose. For these reasons it has always been deemed constitutional and proper that the speech from the throne

should be distinguished by a fitting reserve." Yet he denied that the wording of the speech was "vague and unsatisfactory." It distinctly stated that the principle of their commercial code was the principle of "unrestricted competition." "What the queen's speech really said," explained Mr. Disraeli, "was that if it should appear that recent legislation in effecting a great deal of good—we did not dispute that—had done some harm—we did not say that it had—then the House would take the matter into consideration. The good was positive, the harm only was conditional. Her Majesty's speech contained a distinct affirmation that the principle of our commercial code was 'unrestricted competition.' That policy having been accepted by the government after due deliberation, the first minister of the Crown, on the first night of the session, announced the fact in the most explicit manner. I also made on the same night some observations in this House which the right hon. member for the university of Oxford" (Mr. Gladstone) "thought so strong, that he intimated hon. members on this side of the House, as Protectionists, would stultify themselves by continuing to support the government." Surely such statements, remarked the chancellor of the exchequer, ought to be sufficient to proclaim the future commercial policy of the cabinet.

In the opinion of Mr. Disraeli the resolutions of Mr. Villiers were unprecedented. Let the House of Commons for a moment, he argued, try their justice, equity, and policy by parallel instances in similar cases. He would take first the case of that House after the Reform Bill, and the position of the government in 1835. Sir Robert Peel and his friends had offered to the Reform Bill a powerful and prolonged opposition. Sir Robert suddenly became minister in 1835, and when he was minister he expressed his determination not to disturb the Reform Bill, although he did not approve of it. What, asked the chancellor of the exchequer, would then have been thought

of the Opposition, if in a new parliament, and with a ministry in such a position, they had proposed a resolution declaring that the Reform Bill was a "just, wise, and beneficial" measure? Why, by such a course parliamentary government would be rendered impossible in the country! Suppose again, he said, that the followers of Sir Robert Peel were to come into office, what, pray, was to prevent them being met with a resolution declaring that the Ecclesiastical Titles Act which they had opposed was a "wise, just, and beneficial" measure? Ministers, said Mr. Disraeli, had fulfilled all their pledges but one—the assimilation of their financial to their commercial system; and they were now ready to fulfil that. Had it not been for the vexatious motion now before them the measures of the government would already have been brought forward. The present cabinet declined to be ministers on sufferance; they neither desired nor would they submit to carry on the government under any indulgence which was foreign to the spirit of the British constitution.

"Sir," concluded Mr. Disraeli, "I believe I have now said all that is necessary for me to address to the House; and I am content here to leave the case of the government. I have placed before the House, very imperfectly I can easily conceive, the whole of that case. The subject is somewhat large, and I have endeavoured to be as succinct as circumstances required. If I had only personal feelings to consider, I should sit down; but I think, without vanity, and speaking in the name of the government, that there is, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves placed, something which may justify me in looking beyond personal considerations. We believe that we have a policy which will conduce to increase the welfare, content, and prosperity of the country. I hope it is not an unworthy ambition to desire to have an opportunity of submitting that policy to parliament. But I am told that that is not to be the case. Now, although I have

too much respect for this House to descend to advocate the cause of a government, yet I will say something on behalf of a policy. I will not, therefore, without a struggle, consent to yield to an attack so unfair as that to which we are subjected. I will not believe, remembering that this is a new parliament, that those who have entered it for the first time have already, in their consciences, recorded their opinions. On the contrary, I believe that they will listen to the spirit and to the justice of the plea which I put before them to-night. It is to those new members, on whichever side of the House they may sit, that I appeal with confidence. They have just entered, many of them after much longing, upon that scene to which they have looked forward with so much anxiety, suspense, and interest. I have no doubt they are animated with a noble ambition, and that many of them will hereafter realize their loftiest aspirations. I can only say, from the bottom of my heart, that I wish that, whatever may be their aim in an honourable career, their most sanguine hopes may not be disappointed. Whatever adds to the intelligence, eloquence, and knowledge of the House, adds also to its influence; and the interests of all are bound up in cherishing and maintaining the moral and intellectual predominance of the House of Commons. To the new members, therefore, I now appeal. I appeal to the generous and the young; and I ask them to pause, now that they are at last arrived on the threshold of the sanctuary of the constitution, and not become the tools and victims of exhausted factions and obsolete politics. I move the following amendment—'That this House acknowledges with satisfaction that the cheapness of provisions, occasioned by recent legislation, has mainly contributed to improve the condition and increase the comforts of the working classes; and that unrestricted competition having been adopted, after due deliberation, as the principle of our commercial system, this House is of opinion that it is the duty of the govern-

ment unreservedly to adhere to that policy in those measures of financial and administrative reform which, under the circumstances of the country, they may deem it their duty to introduce."

A long debate ensued. The Protectionists were perfectly willing to adopt the policy of free trade, since the country desired it; but they declined to support the resolution of Mr. Villiers, which was tantamount to a condemnation of their tactics in the past. Mr. Bright followed Mr. Disraeli. He denied that the Protectionists had not attempted to unsettle the legislation of 1846, and he referred to motions made by various members of the party hostile to free trade and the abolition of the navigation laws. The country, he said, had now been appealed to, and the verdict had been delivered against Protection. Parliament had been asked to pronounce the final judgment on the question, and therefore it was only right that Mr. Villiers, who for fifteen years had been the consistent leader of free trade in that House, should be the person to draw up the terms of judgment, and not Mr. Disraeli, who had been a Protectionist during the whole period of his career. Between the two resolutions there was, he considered, a great difference. The one established a principle, the other a fact. The one proclaimed the benefit of free trade to the whole country and the whole world, whilst the other left everything to hazard—it referred to certain injustice to be righted, to certain interests to be compensated, and to any amount which parliament might be induced to give. Remembering, cried Mr. Bright, the conduct of the Protectionists in the past, he declined to put implicit confidence in their future policy without express stipulations and conditions. Was it a fact that Mr. Disraeli and his party recommended the farmers not to endeavour to unsettle the Act of 1846, and that they had tried to put down the clamorous complaints of the farmers, as the question of the labourers was the only one involved in

the matter? Did not they, on his side of the House, recollect the speeches made by the Protectionists all over the country, and with what excited feelings their simple hearers had been sent back to their towns and counties?

The chancellor of the exchequer had sought to defend himself by referring to the conduct of Sir Robert Peel in 1835. When a precedent was quoted there ought at least to be some analogy between the cases. Did Sir Robert Peel, from 1832 to 1835, employ himself in that House, or did his followers employ themselves in the country, in proving that the Reform Bill was destructive of the British constitution, and that it was absolutely necessary for him and them to take the first opportunity of appealing to the country to undo that act? If Sir Robert Peel had been guilty of that, the very first proposition that would have been laid before the House of Commons would have been a resolution bearing to the Reform Bill precisely that relation which the motion now before the House bore to the corn-law repeal. Nor could he, continued Mr. Bright, omit to notice another mis-statement. It had been frequently asserted by the Protectionists that the corn law was originally granted to the landlords to compensate them for the special burdens which had been imposed upon them in the taxation of the country; or else it was for the purpose of preparing the landlords to endure some special burdens which the enactment of the corn law would enable them to bear.

What grounds were there for that assertion? He did not recollect ever having found, in the debate of 1815 on the corn laws, one single word that led to the conclusion that the corn law was then granted to the landowners to compensate them for any exclusive burdens that they bore. He had never heard of any chancellor of the exchequer imposing any tax upon the landed portion of the community for the burdens they had to

endure, or that the landed interest was well able to bear all their share of the taxation because that interest enjoyed the protection of the corn laws. On the contrary, statistics plainly disproved such a statement; no single tax had been laid upon land, or upon the landowner as a land-owner, but all interests had been included in the imposition of the taxes, and none were excluded from the benefits which might result from the repealing of taxation. It was true that the agricultural class had sustained a loss. "We never pretended to deny that," said Mr. Bright, "but always said that it would be the one result of the repeal of the law. But if they have a loss, it is made up by increased production, by greatly improved cultivation, and extended markets for the sale of wool and animal food. They had also, like all the rest of the population, lighter burdens to bear and cheaper living, besides an enormous gain to all classes of our population who are consumers of agricultural produce at all."

The country, concluded the member for Manchester, had decided against Protection, and therefore the resolution of Mr. Villiers should be accepted, and not the amendment of Mr. Disraeli. The resolution confirmed the decision of the nation; the amendment was made with a reservation which might possibly involve them in hurtful and injurious consequences in the future. If the country, by supporting the resolution of Mr. Villiers, showed that the advantages of free trade were universally appreciated, it might bring other nations round to the doctrine, and so much more would the free-trade policy be advantageous. "No man of sense," said Mr. Bright, "imagines that government will attempt to restore Protection; but I believe it is for the good of the country and the character of the House, that we should establish, by a final decision to-night, that which was believed by the majority of 1846, namely, that the Act abolishing the duty on foreign corn was a just, a wise, and beneficial measure. I must call the attention of the House to the

admissions made as to the prosperous condition of the labouring classes in all parts of the country. Look at their employment, how steady it is, and how satisfactory their wages. Look at their moral and social condition, and observe what tranquillity prevails all over the country. Is that no compensation to you the holders of five, ten, or twenty thousand acres? Is it no advantage to you, even if you had suffered pecuniarily—which, as a body, I believe you have not; but if you had, is it no compensation to you that you can enjoy without the envy of any class your high ancestral position—enjoy it without the consciousness that some poor wretch is suffering in order that you may be rich? If you look at it in that light you will find, in the condition of the labouring classes, ample compensation for any injury which you suppose the repeal of the corn law may have inflicted on you. . . . I ask the House to sanction its own policy, to set its seal irrevocably on what it did in 1846, and by its vote of to-night to establish on a firm basis the charter of free industry to the people of this kingdom."

The government had frankly admitted their willingness to adopt a free-trade policy; they only objected to the resolution of Mr. Villiers since it cast reflections upon their past conduct, and rendered their position unnecessarily humiliating. Lord Palmerston, who, if once Protection were cast to the winds, saw no objection to serve under Lord Derby, thought he perceived a plan whereby the difficulties of the situation could be solved. He proposed an amendment, which, whilst confirming the policy of free trade, would at the same time relieve the government from having to consent to disagreeable admissions. He rose up and thus delivered himself. "Respecting the resolution of Mr. Villiers," he said, "there was not one word in it to which he could not subscribe." He concurred in the opinions it expressed with regard to the past, with regard to the present, with regard to the future. He thought the measures of policy

of which it treated were wise, were just, and had been beneficial. Therefore, if the motion of Mr. Villiers were put by the Speaker to the House, "ay" or "no," he would be compelled by his own convictions to say "ay" to that resolution, and to agree to all the affirmations which it contained.

"But, sir," argued Lord Palmerston, "I cannot but consider, also, not only my own convictions and opinions, but the opinions of others who are desired to concur in the proceedings of this House. Now, sir, there is a large party in this House who have entertained opposite opinions. That party have—honourably I think—yielded their personal and original convictions to their sense of what is the opinion of the country and of this House. I am far from joining in taunts and reproaches upon those who so yield their early impressions to the irresistible force of events. Why, sir, in a free country like this there could be no more dangerous doctrine to establish than this—that it is disgraceful to men to yield their convictions to the force of counteracting events and circumstances. If every man in this country were to be chained for ever to the opinions which he entertained in the earliest part of his career, there could be no progress or improvement in the land. We meet here from day to day for no other purpose than to convince each other; and every man who endeavours to persuade people to come round to his opinions, debars himself, I think in justice, from the right of reproaching them when he has succeeded. Then, I say, that I think that, so far from casting reproaches upon that large party in this House and in the country who have surrendered their original impressions to the convictions which an overwhelming course of events has produced, we should consider that course as honourable to them as it is beneficial to the country. And the resolution proposed by Her Majesty's government does, in my opinion, contain the fullest acknowledgment of the benefits which the present system of commercial legislation has produced, and does pledge every

man who votes for it to contribute to render that system henceforward permanent."

He was at a loss to conceive, continued Lord Palmerston, how a man who voted for that resolution could afterwards shelter himself under any ambiguity in its language to back out of an opinion to which that resolution irrevocably pledged him. He really saw very little difference in substance and effect between the resolution of Mr. Villiers and the amendment of Mr. Disraeli. If anything, the amendment was in some respects stronger than the resolution, because it concluded with an expression of the opinion of the House as to what it was the duty of the government to do—a rather unusual thing he thought. For his part, said Lord Palmerston, he certainly should prefer the form adopted by Mr. Villiers in stating the readiness of the House to consider any measures which might be proposed in conformity with the policy which that House affirmed ought to be established. Still there was one passage in the resolution of Mr. Villiers which he regretted to come across, and which did appear to him to be fairly considered by the Conservatives as a bar to their acceptance of that resolution.

"Now, sir," said Lord Palmerston, with that geniality and good taste which so often characterized him, "all that the country asks of parliament—all that the country cares about, in my opinion, is, what parliament means to do in this matter—what is to be the principle upon which the legislation of the country is to be founded. I do not think that the country cares, and I do not think it has much right to care what may be the private opinions of gentlemen as to that policy. I think it is rather following the example of tribunals whose conduct we are not much in the habit of approving; it is somewhat like the practice of the Inquisition to compel people to come before you; and not content with declaring that their conduct will be in conformity with your views and inten-

tions, to force them to go down on their knees and recant their opinions, or to profess opinions which you choose to impose upon them. Sir, we are here an assembly of gentlemen, and we who are gentlemen on this side of the House should remember that we are dealing with gentlemen on the other side; and I for one cannot reconcile it to my feelings to call upon a set of English gentlemen unnecessarily, for any purpose that I have in view, to express opinions they do not entertain, or to recant opinions which may be still lingering in their minds. I will grant, if you like, that they still think that the measures of free trade were not just: wise I think they can hardly refuse to acknowledge them, when they say that those measures have mainly contributed to produce the improved condition of the country generally, and of the industrious classes especially; for it is hard, I think, to say that measures which have had such an effect have not been in their nature wise. I myself am of opinion that when the party who still call themselves by the antiquated name of Protectionists come to consider calmly and free from the irritation of former disputes the free-trade measures and their results, they will come round to our opinions on the point of justice as well as on that of expediency. But it is in my opinion unnecessary, and is nothing to the purpose, to know what they think as to the original justice or injustice of this policy. I should therefore, sir, very much wish that some middle course could be suggested, and that some resolution might be proposed which, on the one hand asserting in the broadest manner the determination of this House to further and continue the policy which we approve of, should, on the other hand, be free from those expressions which prevent the resolution of my hon. and learned friend from being unanimously adopted."

He considered the motion before the House should not be converted into a party question, or made the occasion for

a party struggle. If, argued his lordship, the resolution of Mr. Villiers were pressed, it might be rejected. Such a fate was not impossible; because he thought there were many members of the House, not only many of those younger greenhorns who had been appealed to by speakers on both sides, but many of the more experienced old stagers of parliament, who would be disinclined to convert the motion before them into an opportunity for overturning the government. He himself was one of those who held that opinion. It was a separate question altogether, and ought to be kept separate from any considerations of confidence or want of confidence in the administration. It was profaning a great principle of domestic policy to convert it into a mere engine of temporary party warfare. "And supposing that the resolution of Mr. Villiers should be rejected!" cried Lord Palmerston. "Why, it would go forth over the length and breadth of the land, and over the Atlantic to the United States, that the free-trade party was in a minority in the House of Commons, and that the verdict of the country, as expressed by parliament, was against free trade. People would say, 'You have a Protectionist House of Commons, and how can we possibly rely upon the permanence of a system which is at variance with the settled convictions and declared opinions of the majority of the House of Commons?' That would certainly be a great calamity, and was a thing to be avoided as one which would be very mischievous in its effects. And even if the resolution of Mr. Villiers were carried by a small majority, would that be a satisfactory result? Would it be a satisfactory result compared with a vote unanimously given, as it might be, he hoped by the whole House of Commons, affirming the principle of free trade as the permanent foundation of the commercial policy of that country?"

"I think that on an occasion like this," continued Lord Palmerston, "when the great interests of the country are the subject of

discussion, and when the decision of parliament may have on the one hand a most advantageous result to the cause of which so many persons are so honourably the champions ; and when, on the other hand, evil consequences might be produced to the interests which they wish to support generally, I think we might all of us cast aside the feelings arising from the contest which is over, that we might accept the hand which is tendered by those with whom we have hitherto been fighting, and that we ought not to be too nice in requiring or compelling them to state what is the degree of conviction that has been wrought in their minds. If they consent to act with us, I think we ought to be satisfied with that ; and I think it is ungenerous on the part of the majority, if majority there be, to endeavour to compel the minority to subscribe to opinions of which they may not entirely approve. Such a course in preventing unanimity, or almost unanimity—for in fact I should prefer to have just two or three voting against the proposition for the look of the thing, and for the sake of greater contrast—such a course would be, in my opinion, not only ungenerous, but it must fail of its purpose, and we only deprive ourselves of the authority which a unanimous vote would give to this House. I say, I think it is not only ungenerous to ask gentlemen to express opinions which they do not conscientiously entertain, but I think it is impolitic and unwise, as well as unjust—that we are defeating our own purpose, and depriving ourselves of the principles of a policy which we think essential to the interests of our country ; we are depriving those principles of a great amount of support which is now tendered to us, and which it only rests with us to accept.” Lord Palmerston then concluded by saying that he would not at present move a second amendment with a third set of resolutions, but would suggest one which might run thus :—

“ That it is the opinion of this House that the improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes, is

mainly the result of recent legislation, which has established the principle of unrestricted competition, has abolished taxes imposed for purposes of protection, and has thereby diminished the cost and increased the abundance of the principal articles of the food of the people.

“ That it is the opinion of this House that this policy, firmly maintained and prudently extended, will best enable the industry of the country to bear its burdens, and will thereby most surely promote the welfare and contentment of the people.

“ That this House will be ready to take into consideration any measures consistent with these principles, which, in pursuance of Her Majesty’s gracious speech and recommendation, may be laid before it.”

That form of words, Lord Palmerston contended, contained everything except the word “ just ; ” and the insertion of that word would not prevent any ministry from giving “ relief ” or “ compensation ” to the agricultural interest. He left the suggestion with members on the Conservative side of the House, thinking they might be disposed to consider it as offered in a spirit of conciliation.

This suggestion led to some discussion. Sir William Clay wished to know first, of the chancellor of the exchequer, whether he was willing to withdraw his amendment upon the understanding that the House acquiesced in the resolution moved by Lord Palmerston ; secondly, of Mr. Villiers, whether, on a similar understanding, he would withdraw his motion ; and thirdly, of the chancellor of the exchequer, whether, in the event of Mr. Villiers refusing to withdraw his motion, he, Mr. Disraeli, would accept the resolution of Lord Palmerston as a substitute for his own.

Sir James Graham, before answers were returned to those questions, wished to make a statement relative to the share he himself had taken in framing the original resolutions moved by Mr. Villiers. He then narrated the communications he had had with Lord Aberdeen and Lord John Russell

respecting the wording of the resolutions and the changes they underwent, in which he had sought to retain certain words with the view of traversing a presumption arising upon the queen's speech, that the question of compensation would be entertained, and he had inserted the words, "*without inflicting injury on any important interest*," expressly to bar that question. He declined to be a party to any compromise if those words were omitted; but if they were adopted, he should beg Mr. Villiers to withdraw his motion.

Mr. Gladstone said that he did not think that, with regard to the question of compensation, the government ought to be precluded from bringing it forward by an anticipatory motion. The House might take one of two courses: either allow the government to go on with unfettered hands, or adopt a vote of want of confidence, which was the sound, constitutional course. He had intended to vote for the original motion, though there were reasons which would make that course painful to him; but the amendment proposed by Lord Palmerston had saved him from that alternative, and the interests of free trade would, he thought, be best served by the concurrence of the great body of the House in that amendment.

Lord Palmerston hoped that there was now a prospect of a general understanding. He had no objection to the words proposed by Sir James Graham if they were confined to the future. Both sides of the House must feel that it was of great national importance that the question should be set at rest. It was not a question as to the private opinions of the administration, but what the government meant to do; and all must see that the reversal of their late policy was unattainable. Let the House, therefore, calm the public mind, and, without criticising past opinions, affirm what was to be the foundation of their future commercial legislation.

Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, though he preferred the resolution of the government, thought it unnecessary to be very nice in

verbal criticism, and therefore recommended the resolution of Lord Palmerston to the favourable consideration of his friends.

The Marquis of Granby declared that he could not agree with any of the resolutions; they were a mass of mystification, which completely baffled him. He then added, emphatically:—If the country had been benefited by the commercial policy of 1846, and if the working classes in the country were better off now than they had been before, then he thought that some acknowledgment was due to the memory of a man whose patriotism he for one had never doubted, and the purity of whose motives he had never impugned. If that were true, which he denied, then some acknowledgment was due to the memory of that statesman—some acknowledgment that he was not only patriotic and conscientious, but that he was also far-seeing and sagacious. Lord Granby concluded by asking Mr. Disraeli whether he had not been throughout generously and without reserve supported by the Protectionist party.

Mr. Disraeli rose up and readily responded to the appeal of the noble marquis. "I have been reminded," he said, "how generously and without reserve I have been supported by the Protectionist party in this House and in the country. I can truly say, sir, that ever since I have been honoured by that confidence, of which till the last hour of my life I shall be proud, I have done everything that any ability I possess could command, and any energy I had could accomplish, in behalf of the cause of the land of England. I think it has been unjustly treated by recent legislation; but as far as the terms go which I have used in the amendment I have laid upon the table of the House, I cannot resist the conviction that recent legislation, so far as it has produced cheapness of provisions, has contributed to the welfare of the working classes. One would suppose from some observations that have been made, and from the derisive cheers which occasionally arise from gentlemen opposite

that a Protectionist government had suddenly come down to the House of Commons to announce that they had changed their opinions. I can only say that if any gentleman suppose that to be the case, he must take a very erroneous and perverted view of what has occurred.

"Here is a government which in no way succeeded to office in connection with that question. With the consent and concurrence not only of the House, but of the whole country, it was determined that the question of Protection should be left to the decision of the country to be declared by a general election. The verdict of the country has been of an unmistakable character. We have bowed to that unequivocal declaration. If we had acceded to office in order to advocate a system of Protection; if we had dissolved parliament on that question and found that the country would not support us, we should have felt it our duty immediately to relinquish the posts which we now occupy. But, sir, I am not aware from all that has occurred that it is at all our duty; and if there be any gentleman in the House who thinks it is our duty, and if it is the opinion of the majority of this House that it is our duty, that is an issue which can easily and speedily be tried. Sir, I have said myself that this was a question of taxation. No one has pretended, for example, that the native industry of any country has a right to any artificial support, unless it be subjected to some peculiar burthen or to some weight of taxation which otherwise might not be considered of an equitable character. If I find that Protection, as it be called, being now abrogated, it is yet possible to recommend to the House a policy which will relieve the interests that are suffering from the withdrawal of that system, and which will allow them to compete with the industry of the country on fair rivals, I think that that is not only a consistent course for one who has advocated the principle of Protection in former times, but that I am still doing my

duty to that party in this House and out of it who have so generously supported me; and I declare most sincerely that it is only because I think I can bring forward measures which will have the effect of relieving all those interests that have suffered from the precipitate abrogation of past laws, and at the same time of contributing to the general advantage of the community, that I consent for a moment to hold the position which I now occupy."

Mr. Disraeli then vindicated the passage in the queen's speech which had been so much criticised, and asserted that its meaning was perfectly clear and intelligible. The country had voted in favour of free trade, and therefore the financial measures he would shortly introduce would be based upon the principle of unrestricted competition. He strongly objected to the three odious epithets (wise, just, and beneficial) in the resolution of Mr. Villiers, and consequently should give them his unhesitating opposition. He considered that the phraseology of that resolution was injurious to the Conservatives, and as a matter of general policy unwise. "It is all very well to say," he remarked, "that these are only words; that many who did not think the legislation of 1846 wise and beneficial may be of that opinion now, though they thought otherwise then. But no one can have two opinions as to the meaning and the motive with which these words were inserted; and we are of opinion that in public, as in private life, it is a mistake to submit to insult." He, therefore, objected to the resolution; deeming it "unjust, ungenerous, and unwise."

The amendment proposed by Lord Palmerston was, however, a very different measure; and though, with the "pardonable vanity of human nature," he, Mr. Disraeli, might prefer the amendment that he himself had drawn up, still the two suggestions were really so similar in character, that it would be trifling with the House to press which was the one to be adopted. "With respect," said the chancellor of the exchequer, "to the

amendment which has been suggested by the noble lord, I confess, that although I may have that parental fondness which has been already confessed in the debate, I cannot feel that I should be justified in opposing the general feeling of the House in any respect whatever. In the noble lord's resolution there may be expressions to which I might demur; there may be expressions in it which I might regret to see placed on the journals of the House with my individual responsibility and sanction; but, after all, that is mere fighting about words and not about facts. I believe that there is no difference between us with respect to facts; that it is a mere question of phrases; and I certainly shall not oppose the general feeling of the House as regards any preference they may have for the amendment of the noble lord over that of the government. That is a question of very minor importance. The real question before us is, whether the hon. and learned member for Wolverhampton and his friends are to outrage the feelings of this side of the House, and of many gentlemen on the other side, by a course which I think, totally irrespective of personal feeling, is most impolitic and unwise."

The debate was not allowed to flag from lack of speakers. Lord John Russell now rose up to regret that the government had not advised Her Majesty to make a distinct declaration from the throne on the subject of their commercial and financial policy, respecting which the country had been so long divided. It had become, therefore, absolutely necessary that some member on the Opposition side of the House should bring forward a resolution upon that subject, and hence none was so fitting as Mr. Villiers. He himself, said Lord John, had advised the insertion in the resolutions of the words, "wise and just." The amendment of the government appeared to him equivocal, leaving it doubtful whether the law of 1846 might not be characterized as an act of injustice and folly, which should be reversed. Although Mr. Disraeli had

denied it, the question at issue really was, free trade or Protection. All who were of opinion that free trade should be persevered in should unite, if possible, in a vote to that effect. He recommended, however, to Mr. Villiers that, since Mr. Disraeli had offered to substitute for his amendment that of Lord Palmerston, he should declare his willingness to adopt that resolution.

Mr. Cobden warned members on the other side that, if they raised the question of compensation in the shape of taxation, they would cause another struggle as disastrous for them as the last. He was anxious that the House should bring the question to a test, whether, after a dissolution, they stood, in respect to the question of free trade, in as good a position as before. He therefore entreated Mr. Villiers not to shrink from dividing the House.

Mr. Villiers vindicated the course he had taken, and declined to withdraw his resolution. "It is because," he said, "there is evidently yet a serious difference of opinion upon the success of the free-trade policy and because the majority feel bound to declare their opinion, that I have proposed this resolution, and that I now feel bound to adhere to it as truly and simply declaring the opinion of the country."

On the order of the day being read for resuming the adjourned debate, the chancellor of the exchequer withdrew his amendment. Lord Palmerston now moved in lieu of it a resolution "that the improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes, is mainly the result of recent legislation, which has established the principle of unrestricted competition, has abolished taxes imposed for the purposes of protection, and has thereby diminished the cost and increased the abundance of the principal articles of the food of the people."

One of the most amusing of the party speeches delivered during this memorable debate came, as might have been expected, from Mr. Bernal Osborne, the wag of the House. He began by laughing at the

various amendments put before them; yet to his mind the only one they ought to adopt was the original resolution of Mr. Villiers. It was, he sneered, no question of words—it was not a matter to be left to the etiquette of the pump-room of Bath, or to a master of the ceremonies. It was the vindication of a policy—a policy which Sir Robert Peel commenced in 1842 and completed in 1846. It might be all very well for certain gentlemen to indulge in nice criticism, but they were there to consider what was just and right; it was a great question of political morality, and not a question of what was agreeable to the feelings of the Conservative party. He therefore expressed his surprise at the amendment proposed by Lord Palmerston, and still more at his speech. He was aware that some people looked upon his lordship as a sort of wet nurse to the present administration—who attended them in their infancy, and cherished them in their adversities last session; so perhaps it was quite natural for the noble lord to step in to relieve the British Protectionist when he was almost choking with their endeavours to swallow a crust of free-trade bread. He had a strong impression that the sympathies of Lord Palmerston would hereafter be enlisted more by the Tory benches than by his old and tried friends.

It might be all very well for the noble lord to say of his new friends and connections on the other side of the House that they were pursuing a politic course; but his lordship went a little too far when he contended they were pursuing a creditable course. For his part, commented Mr. Osborne, no honest politician could say that the conduct of the Protectionist party had been a credit to themselves. Why, in the first place, could there be anything more audacious than the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer? It appeared to him that Mr. Disraeli had taken a leaf out of the book of a great French character—no, he did not allude to M. Thiers, but to Danton—who when

asked to give a reason for his success said, “Audacity, always audacity.” What had been the course pursued by Mr. Disraeli? That gentleman had declared that neither he nor Lord Derby had endeavoured to reverse the system of free trade. True, Mr. Disraeli never had possessed the courage to make a direct or specific attempt to reverse the free-trade policy; but the House must recollect the course which he allowed his friends and supporters to take. The country was flooded with pamphlets attacking the principles of free trade. Meetings were held all over the kingdom upholding Protection; and members went about from one town to another raging against the commercial system introduced by Sir Robert Peel.

Let the House, said Mr. Osborne, beginning to examine a bundle of papers, listen to some of the sounds emitted during this period of Conservative passion. This was what Lord Malmesbury had said:—“He hoped to God the time would never come when the free-trade theory would be consummated; but should it please God in His anger that it should be effected, then would this great kingdom soon return to her normal and natural state—a weather-beaten island in a northern sea.” “If this country,” cried another Protectionist, “were to continue great and free, moderate import duties must be established; the experiment of free trade had been tried and failed; common sense always said it would fail. He recommended the tenant-farmers to persevere; let each, when they returned home, tell their neighbours to persevere, and justice would sooner or later take place.” At a meeting presided over by one of the members for Cambridgeshire (Mr. E. Ball), three groans had been proposed for Sir Robert Peel as “the arch-enemy of the human species.” When Lord Derby came into power, a deputation waited upon his lordship, asking what he intended to do? And this was the noble earl’s answer:—“If there be any,” said Lord Derby, “who are of opinion that I am flinching from or

hesitating in the advocacy of those principles which I held in conjunction with my late friend (Lord George Bentinck), I authorize you to assure one and all, that those who represent that in my case will find no hesitation, no flinching, no change of opinion. I only look for the day when it may be possible for me to use the memorable words of the Duke of Wellington on the field of Waterloo, and say, ‘Up guards and at ‘em!’’ When the member for North Lincolnshire (Mr. Christopher) was appointed chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, what did that minister say in his address to his constituents? “I accept office under the administration of the Earl of Derby from a conviction of his sincere desire to reverse that financial and commercial policy which is so injurious to native industry and capital.”

And these are the gentlemen, cried Mr. Osborne, who we are assured have done nothing to reverse the policy of 1846, and whose feelings we are to be so careful not to wound! The chancellor of the exchequer was, of course, a safer and more discreet man; yet, said Mr. Osborne, it was ludicrous, when they referred to his statements in the past, for him to come down to the House and assert that he had never attempted to reverse the policy of free trade. But now they were told that Protection was one of those things which were obsolete and exhausted. Was the House sure of that? Was it quite sure that the conversion of the Protectionists was sincere? He for his own part did not believe that it was sincere; and he objected, as a matter of principle, to men carrying on the government of the country who were opposed in their hearts to the principles of free trade. He maintained that Mr. Disraeli, who had so bitterly accused Sir Robert Peel of bamboozling one party and plundering another, had no right to hold office for one moment to carry out principles which he had stolen from other people. He must say that since the lamented demise of that celebrated oriental

juggler Ramo Samee—a gentleman who was equally known for his dexterity of hand and his great courage—a gentleman who could alike cut for himself a hand of trumps and swallow a broadsword—he had known no individual with so many ingenious devices and such inordinate capacity of swallow as Mr. Disraeli, the creator of his party in that House. But let them, warned the wag, not be deluded by a great conjuror from giving their vote for what was just and right. They need not be alarmed at the threat of the resignation of ministers. That was an old threat, and sure he was that they all would “bow” to that decision. The time had gone by when there need be any difficulty in creating a ministry, and one use of the present cabinet was certainly to show how a ministry could be improvised. The House might depend upon it, that so long as the cholera did not carry off the government clerks, the government would be carried on. For his own part he had no confidence in the principles of Mr. Disraeli or his party. He therefore called on the House not to give their confidence to a gang of political latitudinarians who had no belief, politically speaking, save on the Treasury bench, no hope but in the perpetuity of place. He would therefore vote in all sincerity for the resolution of Mr. Villiers.

The debate continued to draw its interesting yet somewhat monotonous length along. Speaker after speaker rose up to add his tributary of talk to the general flood of criticism. All the arguments of the free traders followed on the same lines; the same well-worn theories, the same often-quoted statistics, the same reproofs as to the past policy of the Protectionists, were all launched forth and freely employed. The free traders could not understand why those who opposed them objected to admit that the repeal of the corn laws was “wise, just, and beneficial.” Protectionists appeared to have no hesitation in declaring that the policy which had rendered corn

cheap—which had provided for the admission of foreign corn, and thereby made the food of the people abundant and cheap—was “wise,” and yet they would not avow that the Act of Parliament was a “wise act!” Surely such objection seemed to the ordinary mind a very remarkable refinement. Then as to the word “just.” Why should that term be a stumbling-block to the Conservatives? The corn laws had been laws not imposed for the benefit of any particular class, or to be continued on that ground; but as being, in the first place, in harmony with the general policy of the country, which was the protection of native industry—the protection, amongst other producers, of the producers of corn. In the next place the question was understood to be one of public policy, and that it was considered desirable to raise within the country sufficient food for the sustenance of the people. These were the great public reasons for the maintenance of the corn laws. Still, the moment parliament decided that it was not wise to keep up the system of Protection—that it was not wise to diminish the food of their own people, and make the food dear in order to obtain the advantage of having it all produced within themselves—from the moment such a declaration was made those laws ceased to be just, because they could only be considered just when defended on the ground of public welfare. So soon as parliament had declared that they were not for the public welfare—that none but a certain class, such as the owners of land, could profit by them, and that the great body of the nation were not benefited by them—the laws at once were stamped with the mark of injustice. Why then, asked the free traders, should Protectionists object to admit that the repeal of the corn laws was “just?”

And the same hostility to the word “beneficial” was equally ill-founded. The Protectionists had no hesitation in declaring that the improved condition of the country, and especially of the working-

classes, was owing to recent legislation, and also, that that policy should be further pursued. If, then, they admitted that great benefits had flowed from such a policy—that the food of the people had been improved thereby, and that great benefits had been conferred on the whole body of the nation—it was, indeed, impossible to understand the objection of the Conservatives to the word “beneficial.” What that party, in fact, really said, was this:—“Here is a measure which parliament in its wisdom has enacted, and which has conferred great benefits on the people; we admit the wisdom, the justice, and the beneficial policy of parliament, yet we will not avow that the measure itself was either wise, or just, or beneficial.” “It reminds me,” said Lord John Russell, “of a remark made by Lord Plunkett with reference to one of the scruples of Lord Brougham, when he said, it was rather more fit for a novel, to be called *The Delicate Distress*, than for parliament.”

Then, contended the free traders, it was surprising how the government could possibly regard the original resolution of Mr. Villiers as a vote of want of confidence. If ever there was a question on which the House was entitled to be quite unfettered by governmental considerations, it was certainly the one now before them; because ministers had told the people at the very commencement that the government had placed their own opinions on the shelf, and that the country was to pronounce freely upon the matter, without any reference to the private opinions of the cabinet. If that were so, why, then, should the free traders in the House of Commons be prevented from pronouncing freely their opinion of the policy and justice of recent commercial legislation, simply because ministers chose to put the construction of a vote of want of confidence on the motion of Mr. Villiers? The Liberal party was not being fairly dealt with by the government exhibiting such extreme sensitiveness. It was only right that free traders should give the proper

reasons why they supported their commercial policy—their verdict should be graven on the rock, and not written on the sand. It was not sufficient to admit that the repeal of the corn laws had cheapened provisions ; it was not sufficient for free traders to defend their policy on the prosperity of the day. They must take higher ground, and advocate the repeal of the corn laws on the broad principle of civil right and justice, and on the basis that a man has a right to freedom of exchange. If they merely justified a policy on the ground of its rendering provisions cheap and the prosperity it produced ; if, at the same time, they shrank from declaring that it was a just policy—who should say, that if from various causes provisions rose, or manufacturing or commercial distress overclouded the country, they would not be told that the time had arrived for the reconsideration of a policy which had been built on the cheapness of provisions, and the manufacturing prosperity it produced ? Such a mode of dealing with a question would justify confiscation or repudiation. They might say of confiscation that it had benefited the parties in whose favour it had taken place, by their enjoying the property of those persons who had been robbed ; or they might allege the same of repudiation. It was, therefore, necessary for free traders to contend most emphatically, that their commercial policy was not only a beneficial one, but also a just and righteous policy. The Protectionists might find that resolution somewhat bitter to swallow, yet the flavour would, to a certain extent, be counteracted by the sweets of office.

And after all, what a monstrous anomaly it was, cried the free traders, that the cabinet should tell the House of Commons, " We are going to carry out a given policy, which we admit has been attended with such advantages; but if this House should declare that that policy is 'just, wise, and beneficial,' we will resign." What did the government mean ? Did they want to have an opportunity of whispering against and assailing

in secret the policy which they professed to be engaged in carrying out ? Did they mean to adopt it, and then at the same time say that it was unwise and unjust ?

These questions naturally led up to the charge, freely brought against the government by the Liberals, of double-dealing as to the manner in which the subject of free trade had been taken up. Ministers, asserted the free traders, had said to the country at the time of the elections, " Are you for free trade or are you for Protection ? We shall be ready to bring forward protective measures if the decision of the country is in favour of them ; but otherwise we shall assent to the free-trade policy which has of late been adopted." Such a move, contended the Opposition, was utterly impracticable with the working of the constitution and with parliament. An absolute sovereign could have said, " Let the people decide, and let them tell their representatives their own views with respect to commercial policy," but not an English prime minister. What had been the consequence ? As the head of a party, it was inevitable that those who were joined with Lord Derby should take part on one side or the other in the elections, and thus they had had a most extraordinary spectacle and a most extraordinary result, because they had gentlemen going into the towns and saying, " We are against any tax on bread ; we could not bear a return to the corn laws, and we support Lord Derby ;" and other gentlemen going into the country and saying that the greatest mischief had been done by the repeal of the corn laws, and that they were for Protection, and, therefore, that they supported Lord Derby. Thus, laughed the Liberals, they had now a provision for a perpetual cabinet. Formerly ministers had been obliged to hold certain opinions, certain views, certain principles ; and if the administration found that it was thwarted in those principles, when it thought they ought to be carried into effect, it no longer remained in office. Lord Derby had, however, acted differently. His case was this :—

"If the country approve of Protection, I will carry protective measures; if the country approve of free trade, then I will bring forward free-trade measures; but if I am right, and free trade produces great calamities, then I turn Protectionist again." Thus the same minister might be a Protectionist, then a free trader, and then again a Protectionist. Such an arrangement was certainly a novelty. Free traders knowing, therefore, who were in power, and the slippery tactics of ministers, should be on their guard; they should resolve not to have their commercial policy tampered with; nor should they be ashamed to openly avow the benefits that had resulted from its establishment.

So argued the free traders, one after the other; some supporting the original motion of Mr. Villiers, others—the more genial and generous—declaring that they would give their vote in favour of the amendment of Lord Palmerston.

The Protectionists, in their turn, were equally eloquent and monotonous in the vindication of their principles. None of them, they declared, had entertained a lurking wish that any import duty upon corn, either directly or indirectly, should be attempted. An appeal had been made to the country, and the verdict had been most decided; they also would ask their opponents whether the country party could have met defeat with better feeling? There had been no question raised as to the manner in which that verdict had been obtained, but there might have been. There had been no counter-charge of farmers deluded, though there might have been. There had been a quiet submission to a victory gained. Why, then, insult a defeated party by those three words—wise, just, and beneficial—which had been so properly designated as odious? Certainly there was no more odious dose for honest country gentlemen to swallow than a sentiment which was not their own. There was a great difference between an agreement as to what was the opinion of the country, and in adopting

that opinion as one's own. The country at large had upheld the principle of free trade, and the Protectionists were of opinion that it was the duty of every member of the House to carry out that principle. Why should more be required? They could not describe the repeal of the corn laws as, strictly speaking, a wise and just measure. If the corn laws were in accordance with the general policy of the country at the time when they were changed; and if all advantages were taken away from those persons who had hitherto enjoyed advantages in the shape of Protection, without removing any of the restrictions or impediments which existed in the cultivation of the soil—no matter how beneficial such measure had been to the majority of the people—wisdom and justice could never be predicated of any act unless it were equally beneficial to every class of the community. The measure of 1846 was not just. It was too sudden and precipitate, inasmuch as that particular interest which had been protected up to that period had not been allowed sufficient time to prepare itself for the altered circumstances in which it became placed. Adam Smith had laid it down in the "Wealth of Nations" that where by high duties they had protected any particular industry of a country, so as to induce the employment of a great number of people or a great amount of capital and labour in that particular branch of industry, humanity suggested that in restoring free trade they ought to do it "by slow gradations, and with much reserve and circumspection." In the repeal of the corn laws the free traders had not been actuated by that humanity, and therefore the measure was not strictly wise or just.

Nor could they, further argued the Protectionists, agree to the statement that the prosperity of the country was due to free trade. In their opinion the prosperity of the country had been much exaggerated. To listen to free traders, it would appear as if the present was the first time the country had ever been in a prosperous state. As a

matter of fact the prosperity of the present day bore no comparison with the prosperity of 1834, 1835, and 1836. Let the House listen to a few statistics. From 1831 to 1841 the population had increased ten per cent.; but from 1841 to 1851 it had only increased one per cent. Between 1815 and 1843 real property had increased nearly sixty per cent.; while from 1843 to 1850 it had only been ten per cent. From 1815 to 1843 personal property had increased thirty-seven per cent.; yet between 1843 and 1850 it had actually declined five per cent. From 1831 to 1841 their exports had increased thirty-five per cent.; but from 1841 to 1851 only twenty-three per cent.; while their imports of raw material and the consumption of wool had not increased nearly so much in the latter period as in the former. "I do not ask the House," said the statistics-loving Marquis of Granby, "whether considering all the improvements which have taken place—considering the energy and enterprise which have been elicited—considering the advantages we now have in the inventions of machinery, in the inventions for bringing out the wonderful power of steam by land and by sea—I say, considering all these circumstances and all the advances of the age in inventions and science, am I not entitled to ask if we are not, in point of fact, in a stationary state rather than in that state of progress we are entitled to expect?" Nor was this all. Manufacturers, in endeavouring to meet foreign competition, had been obliged to produce articles so worthless that they did not last half so long as those formerly produced when under the enjoyment of Protection. Had it not been, cried Protectionist after Protectionist, for the vast supply of precious metals which had been poured into the country, and for the large emigration that had taken place, this boasted free trade would have been a decided failure.

Therefore, holding these views—views supported by solid facts—the Protectionist party declined to stultify their conduct in

the past by admitting the accuracy of Mr. Villiers' resolution. The very year after the repeal of the corn laws there had been a collapse in the commercial world which had shaken credit to its very centre. In the crash capital to the extent of upwards of £50,000,000 had been swept away in a few months, and many of the highest and some of the oldest of the commercial firms of the country had been levelled in the dust. Money, wealth, prosperity, all had disappeared; the government had fixed the rate of interest for advances by the Bank of England at eight per cent., and in private transactions that rate of interest had risen, under the severity of the pressure, as high as twenty per cent. Yet that had been under this vaunted system of free trade! It certainly was an extraordinary and unexpected retribution that trade and commerce should have staggered under the first shock. Yet free traders still persevered in their system, and domestic agriculture was the next to reel under the blow. During the succeeding years an amount of agricultural depression had been experienced never before known. Agricultural capital had been swept away by millions, and the pressure had continued with increased and accumulating violence from year to year until Providence had opened to England those vast regions and stores of mineral wealth, whence had flowed ever since riches to an enormous extent. "Providence, sir," cried Mr. Booker, one of the members for Herefordshire, "and not human legislation nor any efforts or results of human wisdom, has removed the pressure and produced these blessings under which the country is now beginning to revive; and, sir, if the principle of Protection to our native industry and capital were now prevailing—firmly maintained and prudently extended or relaxed as occasion justified—I know of no limit within which our national prosperity would now be confined."

Then the Protectionists proceeded to dispute the soundness of the theory of the free traders as to cheapness. Cheapness,

they declared, was not a *desideratum*. Cheapness was no proof of national prosperity and welfare; on the contrary, in proportion as things were cheap the nation was impoverished. Cheapness signified much work and little wages.* What had Sir Robert Peel himself asserted when referring to the corn laws. "He had looked about," he said, "over the world, and had endeavoured to ascertain the proportion in which the people of various countries consumed, in order to ascertain whether they got more for their individual consumption of the necessaries of life where these commodities were cheap as compared with where they were dear. He found that in Poland and Russia the consumption was about five bushels of grain to each individual per year; Germany, where corn was dearer, six bushels per head; in France, where corn was dearer than in any other country excepting England, seven bushels per head; but in England the average consumption was eight bushels per head, and nearly the whole of that consisted of wheat."

Therefore, argued Protectionists, it was not only absurd, but a cruel thing to represent cheapness as a blessing. Let it be remembered, they said, that every article they ate, every beverage they drank, and every article whether of dress or furniture in daily use, was manufactured by the poor; and then to assert that those things should be cheap was opposed to common sense. Nor were the working classes dead to the fact. All over the country trades' delegates had held meetings, and they had resolved, firstly, that free trade had a most

* "Now, there is one other great danger which working men have to look to, and that is, that the great staple industries of England should gradually be starved and ruined by the system of foreign bounties which every nation that is jealous of our greatness is now using to crush our superiority. Just remember that when they say your commercial greatness depends upon having cheap labour, that cheap labour means low wages, and low wages means uncomfortable homes, and uncomfortable homes dwindling families, and dwindling families means a poor mother of the household, overworked and crushed by undue toil, and the father in despair at the end of his days, closing those days, not in his own home, but in some great State-paid institution."—*Lord Sandon at Ormskirk, July 12, 1881.*

pernicious effect upon the minds and actions of statesmen, was destructive of honest dealing, subversive of morality, ruinous to the national resources and character, and therefore ought to be entirely abandoned; and secondly, that the principle of protection to humanity, to the products of labour, land, and capital in Great Britain and her colonies, was the true basis of political and social economy, calculated to give employment and fair remuneration and profit on capital, and thereby to secure the peace and prosperity of the empire. With these resolutions staring them in the face, how could the opponents of Protection argue that the entire community—particularly the working classes—were in favour of free trade?

Nor was this all. Protectionists were asked to vote that the Act of 1846 was "wise, just, and beneficial," when almost every prophecy made by the free traders had not been fulfilled. "There was hardly anything," cried Mr. Ball, one of the most honest and zealous supporters of Protection in the House, "which the free traders had said that had not been falsified by the event; and scarcely a prediction had turned out as they had anticipated. Mr. Cobden had asserted that if the unnatural corn laws were repealed no Briton need any longer emigrate, and that emigration was created altogether by landlords and the corn laws. He had even said that those who were driven to emigrate were men condemned to transportation for the benefit of the landowners. Now, what was the result? Poverty had driven our poor by hundreds and thousands from Britain, and hundreds and hundreds of broken-hearted farmers had been condemned to a premature grave. More than that, hundreds and thousands of farmers were so hopelessly damaged and ruined by what had been done, that they could never be reinstated again. . . . He never would be a party to approve of any resolution which went to say that the happiness of the people and the prosperity of the country had been the

result of free trade. He did not believe it. But he would say this, that after the country had showed itself determined to have free trade, when he saw what was the result and what had been the response of the country, he was bound, as one of those who went there to make laws, to maintain and uphold the laws; and there was nothing more necessary for all parties to observe, than that when the people of this country spoke through the majority in that House, the minority were bound in duty to submit; and therefore he was compelled, of necessity, to say that he must submit. But he would not abandon the field if he were not to take with him the honours of war. He would not go out of the field if he were to be insulted, as he was going; and, therefore, he would never accept the resolution of Mr. Villiers. . . . The Protectionists had been necessitated to surrender the principles which they had advocated—they acknowledged that they had been beaten; but he hoped their opponents would remember that even the Indian who scalped his fallen foe did not lacerate his dead body, and that they would in their hour of triumph not forget the kindly and generous feelings which so universally distinguished the English character in such circumstances. And he said further, that if their real object was to obtain a settlement of this question, they would evince kindlier feelings and a better grace and endeavour to win their opponents over by harmony and good fellowship, so as to have a united testimony given to their principles. Then they would better deserve their triumph by the magnanimity of their conduct; whereas, by trampling on those whom they had defeated, and by manifesting such bitterness of feeling and pouring ridicule on those who had fought them valiantly and foot to foot, and would have beaten them if they had been able, they were only irritating the wound which they ought to seek to heal."

So argued the Protectionists. They did not regret their opposition to the principles

of free trade in the past; they did not consider their objections to that policy to have been disproved; but they would "bow cheerfully" to the decision of the country. They based their arguments upon the views maintained by their leader. Where grave political questions were disputed it was advisable to appeal to the country and to carry out the verdict then given. The chancellor of the exchequer followed the course, on this occasion, which Sir Robert Peel had laid down as the duty of a statesman when called upon to sacrifice private opinions for the public good. Throughout his political career Mr. Disraeli had disapproved of the one-sided system of free trade which the country then was so warmly advocating. He considered such a system, unless based upon reciprocity, as ruinous to many of our most important commercial interests. He was opposed to any theory which tended to benefit one class at the expense of another. If other nations united with us in carrying out the principles of free trade, he would most cordially support such co-operation; but for England to admit the produce of the world into her ports free and untaxed, whilst other countries consented only to receive her goods on the payment of heavy duties was, in his judgment, to court ruin. Such a policy was not free trade, but commercial suicide. Those were his views, and he never hesitated to express them; Protection, in its narrowest sense, he had never upheld, but reciprocity was in his eyes a measure "wise, just, and beneficial."

Still, the country was opposed to his opinions, and it was the duty of an enlightened statesman serving under a constitutional government to "adapt his conduct to the exigency of the moment." He acted as Sir Robert Peel had acted when yielding to public opinion in the matter of the Catholic Emancipation Bill. "I cannot," said Sir Robert, "purchase the support of my honourable friends by promising to adhere at all times and at all hazards, as minister of the crown, to arguments and opinions which I may have heretofore propounded

in this House. I reserve to myself distinctly and unequivocally the right of adapting my conduct to the exigency of the moment and to the wants of the country. . . . This has been the conduct of all former statesmen at all times and in all countries. My defence is the same with that of all others under similar circumstances, and I shall conclude by expressing it in words more beautiful than any which I myself could use—I mean the words of Cicero—*Hæc didici, hæc vidi, hæc scripta legi, hæc de sapientissimis et clarissimis viris, et in hac republica et in aliis civitatibus monumenta nobis litteræ prodiderunt, non semper easdem sententias ab iisdem sed quas-cunque reipublicæ status, temporum inclinatio, ratio concordia postularent, esse defendendas.*"

In all great debates there is generally one speech which, for the grasp of its subject, the soundness of its arguments, the power of its analysis, and the brilliancy of its diction, stands out notably among its fellows. In this memorable free-trade discussion the chief honours among the Opposition were carried off by Mr. Sidney Herbert. His speech was not only an excellent party speech, but he concluded with a panegyric upon the late Sir Robert Peel, as loyal as anything that political devotion has ever called forth. Mr. Herbert had been a Protectionist, but had afterwards enrolled himself under the standard of Sir Robert Peel; the words that therefore fell from his lips on this occasion, though keenly critical, were yet, except when he had occasion to allude to Mr. Disraeli, generous and tolerant. He began by discussing the two original motions before the House, the one of Mr. Villiers and the other of Mr. Disraeli. Between these two motions he could not, he said, have a moment's hesitation. One was moved by a gentleman who had proposed that question to the House years ago, and who had struggled for it under great difficulties and in small minorities. He knew that Mr. Villiers had fought his battle with singular skill and consistency, and not without much labour had brought it to a

happy issue. During the whole time that Mr. Villiers had argued the question of the corn laws—and they were warm times—he had not left a single enemy on either side of the House. But in opposition to that motion of Mr. Villiers was a notice of an amendment coming from a quarter which certainly did not inspire confidence. The speech of Mr. Disraeli—able as it was—impressive in manner, ingenious in argument—left on his, Mr. Herbert's mind, a most painful impression. The chancellor of the exchequer had set out by stating that he was going to give an account of the course which the Protectionist party had taken since 1846, which should be studiously accurate and impartial. Yet no speech could have been more singularly inaccurate. "There are many gentlemen," said Mr. Sidney Herbert, "on the opposite side of the House with whom I have long lived in relations not only of private friendship but of political co-operation; and although I am no longer by party connected with them, I do not hesitate to say that their political reputation as members of a class which forms the chief element of stability in this country, and whose public virtue entitles them to public respect, is most important. It was not, then, without pain that I heard a statement made—a course described—which was, in my mind, an imputation of the deepest dye upon the character of those gentlemen. We all recollect the period that intervened between 1846 and 1852. Was the country quiet? Was there no agitation upon this question? At market tables—in theatres—at Protection societies, one hundred in number—was everything said with a view to secure the stability of the policy of 1846? For my part I acquit the right hon. gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer, as far as his own convictions are concerned, of the charge of ever having been a Protectionist. I never for one moment thought he believed in the least degree in Protection. I do not accuse him of having forgotten what he said or what

he believed in those years. I only accuse him of having forgotten now what he then wished it to appear that he believed. . . . But how will all this appear to the constituencies of the country? What will they think when they come to learn that a vast number of gentlemen holding very strong language upon the subject of Protection—delaying the re-arrangement of rents, which in some cases has become a necessity to the farmer, upon the plea that the legislature would revise the system which established free trade—what will be their feelings when they hear that their object in agitating was not the restoration of Protection, but to secure the stability of the commercial policy of 1846?"

Mr. Herbert then read extracts from the speeches of various Protectionists, showing that during the years intervening between 1846 and 1852 members had openly advocated a return to Protection. He, however, did not, he remarked, bring forward these extracts to taunt members for changing their opinions. "I am the last man," he said, "who would do so, for I am in no position to speak ill of converts. I had had myself to pass through that ordeal, to break up political friendships and to sacrifice office—whatever that may have been worth—because my convictions had been entirely altered on this subject, and because I thought it was not for a man of honour, holding opinions different from those which he held before, to occupy a station of responsibility, and to shrink from attempting to give effect to those opinions upon a question on which immediate action was necessary." He always felt that the principle of Protection would have to be abandoned; but then it became necessary to know who supported it and who deserted from it, and that brought him to the question whether a resolution, such as the one Mr. Villiers had proposed, was necessary. He thought it was necessary because, owing to the ambiguity of the royal speech, they had no other means of knowing the individual opinions of members of parliament

sent here to settle either the principle of free trade or of Protection. He could not accept the amendment of the chancellor of the exchequer. It was not declaratory of the opinion of the House upon free trade. It seemed more like a resolution to test a divided cabinet than anything else; with the duty and conscience of the ministry the House had nothing to do. It was clearly not the duty of the House of Commons to lay down what was to be the business of the executive. The only objection he had to the resolution of Mr. Villiers was that it did cast censure upon the Conservative party; and after all generosity was the best policy.

"Our system," said Mr. Herbert, genially, "is one of political propagandism—we are all anxious to make proselytes—and therefore we ought not to repel a man or a body of men, when they come over to our side, with hard words and terms of humiliation. I must say for myself that I should lament to see a system established by which when a person or a party, from the lapse of time or the occurrence of fresh circumstances, see reason to doubt the accuracy of his former opinions, is anxious to retrace his steps and to adopt sounder views—I should regret the establishment of a system by which such person would be subjected to personal humiliation before he was accepted as a convert. I recollect an observation made by a witty contemporaneous writer, to the effect that all religious sects in free countries succeeded in making converts except the Jews; and he asked, rather quaintly, how it could be expected that any man would become a convert to a faith, the profession of which must begin with a surgical operation? And in the same way I must say I feel strongly—being anxious to bring over as many as I possibly can to the standard under which I fight—that I shall not succeed if I tell hon. gentlemen who differed from me in former times, that their agreement in opinion with me must be commenced by their doing penance—by putting on a white sheet and

standing in the pillory for their former misdeeds." He would therefore give his vote in favour of the resolution of Lord Palmerston, which confirmed the principles of free trade, without being offensive to the party which had opposed them. Then in answer to the appeal of certain free traders that the memory of Sir Robert Peel should be vindicated, he thus concluded:—

"Sir, I think the memory of Sir Robert Peel stands on a pedestal, from which no counter motion, even if it could be carried in this House, could remove it. I knew Sir Robert Peel during my whole life almost—I admired him as a politician—I followed him as a leader—and I loved the man. He was a man, mind you, susceptible—proud, and justly proud, of the purity of his motives—jealous of his honour. I sat by him night by night on that bench when he was attacked by the foulest language, and accused of the meanest crimes. But Sir Robert Peel was a man of a generous nature—he was one who never rejoiced in the humiliation of an adversary; and he would have recollect ed this—that the humiliation, if humiliation it were, was a humiliation to be inflicted not only upon those who had assailed him, but also upon gentlemen for whose character he had the warmest regard. I don't confound hon. gentlemen opposite with those who calumniated Sir Robert Peel. I recollect even at the moment when party strife was embittered to the uttermost—when men's passions rose high—when great disappointment was felt at the course Sir Robert Peel had taken—even at that moment there were hon. gentlemen opposite who continued a general support to his government, and who never, when they opposed this very bill, either threw a doubt upon his motives or assailed his integrity. I say, then, that the memory of Sir Robert Peel requires no vindication—his memory is embalmed in the grateful recollection of the people of this country; and I say, if ever retribution is wanted—for it is not words that humiliate, but deeds—if a man wants to see humilia-

tion—which, God knows, is always a painful sight—he need but look there," and then, suiting the action to the word, Mr. Herbert pointed to the Treasury bench, and the Opposition seconded the application of the words by loud applause.

Not the least interesting feature in this long debate were the tributes of respect and esteem paid to the memory of Sir Robert Peel by members on both sides of the House. The distinguished repealer of the corn laws was now no longer an "apostate" or "traitor," but the purest of patriots and the most practical of statesmen. "As to Sir Robert Peel," said the Protectionist, Mr. Cayley, "he always gave him credit for the honesty of his convictions. He did not object, on the contrary he thought he was quite right, having changed his convictions to change his policy. There was only some difference between them as to the mode in which he carried out his change of opinion as regarded his party." Lord Granby declared that all men should now acknowledge that Sir Robert Peel "was not only patriotic and conscientious, but also farseeing and sagacious." Sir John Pakington said—"In connection with the question of change of views, there have been allusions this evening by different gentlemen, and among others by my noble friend the member for Leicestershire (Lord Granby), to the late Sir Robert Peel. My noble friend spoke in a frank and an honourable spirit on that subject. The members of government have been pointedly alluded to on that subject since; and therefore I cannot and will not shrink from saying that no single word of disrespect to Sir Robert Peel ever has escaped, or ever will escape, my lips. It was my misfortune in 1846 that I could not concur with Sir Robert Peel, and in opposing him on that occasion I made a great sacrifice of both party feeling and personal feeling. I opposed the right hon. gentleman then, and, with whatever degree of diffidence I did so, I never shrank from voting against him when my conscience would not allow

me to vote with him. But I agree with my noble friend, that a purer patriot never lived." Sir James Graham, alluding to Sir Robert Peel, thus delivered himself, "Amidst all his characteristics I should say the Christian temper and forgiveness of my right hon. friend was that which most distinguished him. I say also that he always considered what, under circumstances of public emergency, it was politic to do in reference to the good of the country, and the maintenance of the cause which he espoused." But the most eloquent of all these panegyrics was the tribute paid by Mr. Gladstone.

"I trust," the member for the University of Oxford said, "notwithstanding the bitter exasperation and extraordinary prolongation of the conflict now closing, that a similar spirit of moderation and forbearance still predominates in this House; and I dare tell the hon. member for the West Riding, that I feel no force at all in his appeal to me,* when he quotes the name of Sir Robert Peel, not because that name is not venerated and precious in my eyes, but because I conceive that in giving the vote which we are about to give in favour of the resolution of my noble friend, we are taking the course that he himself would have adopted. It is our honour and pride to be his followers; let us imitate him in that magnanimity which was one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the man. No doubt Sir Robert Peel when he severed the ties of five-and-thirty years, during which he was associated with the party opposite, felt the price that he was paying for the performance of his duty. It was no small matter in the advanced stage of a life like his to break up, and to break up for ever, its habits and its associations. He looked, perhaps, for his revenge; but for what revenge did he look? He did not seek to vindicate it by stinging speeches, or by

* Mr. Cobden had said, "How the friends of the late Sir Robert Peel can go into the lobby with the Protectionist party, and vote against the proposition that their own measure of 1846 was a wise, and a just, and a beneficial measure, passes my comprehension." — November 26, 1852.

motions carried in his favour, or in favour of his policy, if they bore a sense of pain and degradation to the minds of honourable men. The vindication for which he looked was, I am confident, this:—He knew that the wisdom of his measures would secure their acceptance. He knew that those who had opposed them from erroneous opinions would acknowledge them after competent experience. He looked to see them established in the esteem and sound judgment of the country. He looked to see them governing by slow but sure degrees the policy of every nation of the civilized world. He thought that he would have his reward, first, in the substantial and enormous good that he was the instrument in the hands of Providence for effecting; and secondly, in the reputation that he believed would be his own appropriate reward.

And as to that aristocracy, whose prepossessions he might feel that he was then violently thwarting, he, with prophetic insight, anticipated the day when the very men who reviled him—if they were men, as he believed them, of honest judgments and intentions—that those very men, who had used opprobrious language, never so ill-deserved, would in the course of time see that he had never rendered them so great and so solid a service as when, with the whole power of his government, he proposed to parliament the repeal of the corn laws. His belief was, that their cause was a great and sacred cause—that the aristocracy of England was an element in its political and social system with which the welfare of the country was inseparably bound up, and to him, therefore, it was a noble object of ambition to redeem such a cause from association with a policy originally adopted in a state of imperfect knowledge and with erroneous views, but which, with the clear light of experience poured upon it, was each day assuming more and more in the view of the thinking portion of the community the character of what was sordid and what was false. He anticipated those bloodless, those painless rewards,

which would be honourable and delightful to him, had it pleased God to spare him, which will be honourable and delightful to my hon. friend the member for Bury (Mr. F. Peel), and to those who are entitled to claim kindred with that great man; which are now delightful to us who had in former times the high privilege of combating by his side, and who are now as fondly as ever attached to his memory. Those were the vindications for which he looked, and, looking for those vindications, and seeing that we have now arrived at the point when we are celebrating the obsequies of that obnoxious policy, and when we are about to adopt by an overwhelming majority, in one sense or another, a declaration admitted to be perfectly unequivocal of the beneficial character and excellence of the system which he defended, oh, I say, in such a moment as this, if we still cherish a desire to trample upon those who fought manfully and have been defeated fairly, let us endeavour to put it away from ourselves, to rejoice in the great public good we have been enabled to attain, and to take courage from the attainment of that good for the performance of public duty in the future!"

After a keen debate of three nights, the House at length came to a division on the question, "that the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question." There were 592 members in the House—256 voted in favour of Mr. Villiers' motion, 336 against it—majority, 80. A division then took place on Lord Palmerston's amendment, previously to which seventy-one members left the House, and the votes appeared as follows:—

For the amendment,	468
Against it,	53
Majority in favour of the amendment, .	415

The following was the final form of the resolutions, as passed by the House:—

"That it is the opinion of this House that the improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes, is mainly the result of recent legislation,

which has established the principle of unrestricted competition, has abolished taxes imposed for the purposes of Protection, and has thereby diminished the cost and increased the abundance of the principal articles of the food of the people.

"That it is the opinion of this House that this policy, firmly maintained and prudently extended, will, without inflicting injury on any important interest, best enable the industry of the country to bear its burdens, and will thereby most surely promote the welfare and contentment of the people.

"That this House will be ready to take into consideration any measures consistent with these principles, which, in pursuance of Her Majesty's gracious speech and recommendation, may be laid before it."

Such was the end of the memorable debate on free trade which ushered in the doom of Protection, and caused reciprocity to be a word of reproach. The speeches delivered on that occasion have a peculiar interest for us at the present day. After some thirty years' trial, we are beginning to think whether our position as the isolated teacher and practiser of the principles of free trade is causing us to bring forth the fruit we had anticipated. In spite of all the lore of the economists, we find that, save ourselves, every country is advocating more and more strenuously, as the century ages, the selfishness of Protection, and beating us in the race for wealth and commercial prosperity. On all sides—from the farmer, the manufacturer, the hop merchant, the wool merchant, the sugar refiner, the iron founder, the ship builder, and the rest—we listen to moans as to the impossibility of making headway against untaxed foreign competition and cheap foreign labour. Perhaps the day is not far distant when our government, mindful of our producing as well as of our consuming classes, may arrive at the conclusion expressed by Mr. Disraeli when opposing the then new commercial system:—"Reciprocity," he said, "is indeed a great principle—it is

at once cosmopolitan and national. But the system you are pursuing is one quite contrary:^{*} you go on fighting hostile tariffs

* The speech recently delivered by the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords (July 7, 1881) on the sugar bounties, expresses the sentiments of numerous depressed interests at the present day. The Marquis of Salisbury, rising to present a petition from merchants, planters, and others connected with the island of Barbadoes, said, "He had taken the less usual course of giving notice in order that he might preface the presenting of the petition with a few remarks, not only because it was a petition from a distant colony and therefore specially deserving of consideration and attention, but because it expressed the feelings of a portion of Her Majesty's subjects who were complaining, like many others at the present moment, that their interests were adversely affected and the just reward of their industry withdrawn by the fiscal action of foreign powers. The growth of that feeling in this country must be familiar to their lordships, and it was not necessary that he should dwell upon the remarkable change of opinion which had taken place in many centres of industry, or upon the fact that proposals were now being heard which ten or twenty years ago would have been thought impossible. He did not propose to enter upon that portion of the commercial discontent of the present day which dealt with the question of adverse fiscal duties, and which claimed retaliatory duties as a protection. That was a subject of exceeding difficulty, and he would be sorry to say anything that might be interpreted to be at variance with those principles of commercial policy which this country had deliberately adopted. The particular case which the planters and merchants of Barbadoes wished to bring before their lordships and before the English public did not deal with that class of proposals commonly known under the name of reciprocity. The fiscal measures of foreign governments gave advantages to their own subjects in two ways. They imposed duties of protection which excluded our goods from their markets. In that way they gave a bounty to their own traders at the expense of their own consumers. The case which he had to bring before the House did not belong to that class. It was a case of foreign governments by direct bounties drawn from the resources of the taxpayer cheapening the products of their own manufacturers and so driving the manufacturers of other countries, and especially of this empire, out of the market. The consumption of sugar had, as was known, grown enormously during the last ten years, owing to the increase of population and wealth and the abolition of duty in this country, but the import from the West Indian planters had been almost absolutely stationary, while the advantage of the state subsidy was shown by the fact that within the last few years the export of beetroot sugar had advanced from 600,000 tons to more than 1,500,000 tons. The question had engaged the consideration of successive governments, and it was thought that the best course would be to allow the matter to be referred to a committee of the House of Commons, and that committee made an able and exhaustive report last session. The prayer of the petition and the considerations which he should urge on the government did not go beyond the proposals of the committee. He only asked that due attention should be given to those proposals, and that they should not be entirely neglected. Five or six years ago there was a very flourishing sugar refining industry in this country. The competition of the French refiner, supported by the bounty out of the French taxes, had driven the English refiner out of the French market, and all the establishments which existed five or six years ago had now been closed, and the trade was absolutely destroyed. Let him not be told that we were bound by the principles of free trade to look on coldly and calmly and see the destruction of British industries accomplished. If they laid down that doctrine, nothing would induce them to interfere when a

with free imports, and the consequence is that you are following a course most injurious to the commerce of the country."

foreign government was destroying British industry. They might be quite sure that those undertakings which had hitherto been so successful would be imitated in other industries, and industry after industry would be destroyed by the co-operation of foreign governments with foreign manufacturers, against which the British manufacturer was absolutely powerless. If it really was the case that considerable benefit to the consumer resulted from this policy there would, no doubt, be a very material consolation. But it was always open to a foreign government to enter into partnership with its own manufacturers to destroy British industry altogether, and when that was done there was no necessity that the bounty should be continued. Already the French government had made a further step along this path—already a bounty was given on ships. He did not know what effect this step was likely to have on the British industry of shipbuilding, but it was looked upon with considerable alarm, and he regarded it as a danger against which our own manufacturers and government would have to guard. One of the great difficulties in dealing with this question, as was pointed out by the Earl of Beaconsfield, was the network of favoured-nation clauses which now existed, and which would hinder us from taking any isolated action; but the committee to which he had referred were of opinion that the government should institute careful inquiry, and that in the event of its being found impossible to arrive at an international agreement for the suppression of bounties when the existing treaties expired, the opportunity should be taken by Her Majesty's government of making such alterations as would leave them at liberty to deal with the question. With reference to the negotiations which were now going on with France, he thought that Her Majesty's government were bound to see that some arrangements were made, if they did enter into a treaty, for redressing the great injury under which a once flourishing British industry and a considerable number of workmen were now suffering. If they agreed with the French government in this matter, he had no doubt that Austria would be disposed to come to terms. The matter was one for negotiation, and if advocated by England and France combined there would be a greater chance of success than if it were urged by England alone. At all events, he earnestly trusted that Her Majesty's government would not simply let the matter pass by. There was a cry arising for remedies which it might puzzle and perplex statesmen to apply. He knew that a great authority, the chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster—the same authority who some thirty years ago was so fond of telling them that all nations would become free traders—now said that the demand for any action of a reciprocal or retaliatory character was a sign of lunacy.* He certainly had no wish that any action should be adopted which was inconsistent with the sound doctrines of free trade, but he should hesitate to apply the name of lunatic to all who were of the opposite opinion, because he feared that by so doing he would be forced to the conclusion that there were a larger number of lunatics in the world than sane people. He did not think that calling people lunatics would stop the cry which had arisen. *If the government took no pains to remove such grievances as he had indicated, he feared that, before long, they would be confronted by a political force with which they would find it difficult to deal.*"

* This is what Mr. Bright said (Nov. 22, 1863) in his speech in favour of the motion of Mr. Villiers—"Don't you think that if this country, by supporting the motion of my hon. friend, shows that the advantages of free trade are universally appreciated, it may bring other nations round to the doctrine, and so much more will the free-trade policy be advantageous. Let us then put upon the books a resolution that nobody can mistake, and it will have a good effect, not only throughout the United Kingdom, but in every civilised nation in which the subject is under discussion."

CHAPTER X.

THE BUDGET.

SINCE the principle of unrestricted competition had now, by the verdict of the House of Commons, been definitely accepted as the basis of the future commercial policy of the country, the financial statement of the chancellor of the exchequer was eagerly awaited by all parties. Mr. Disraeli did not allow the nation to remain long in suspense. Within a week of the debate upon the motion of Mr. Villiers, the budget was introduced (December 3, 1852), to a house crowded in every part. The first financial statement of the chancellor of the exchequer had been a merely provisional affair; the second, however, it was said, was to be a comprehensive and original undertaking. The House listened to the orator with that curiosity and readiness of appreciation which the audience in a theatre display towards a new and original play, written by one who has hitherto only exhibited marked talent in adaptations.

Mr. Disraeli began by requesting the House to consider the financial statement he put before it as a whole; and he therefore trusted that, in justice to himself, members, on whichever side they sat, would not, until the views of the government were fairly placed before them, be carried away by any feeling of the moment, too precipitately to decide on the motives and principles of the policy which it was now his duty to propound. Since the system of unrestricted competition had been entirely and finally adopted by the country, he would first treat of the claims of those who considered that they had received peculiar injury from what had been familiarly described as "recent legislation." Those suffering interests had within the last few years been fre-

quently before the House. They were the shipping interest, the sugar-producing interest, and the agricultural interest; and it now became a most important question how the grievances they complained of could be redressed. He would deal with each of these interests separately, and he sincerely hoped that parliament would approach the discussion in a generous spirit. He could conceive no state of society more to be deprecated than one in which there were minorities, but powerful minorities, who believed that they were subjected to injustice in consequence of changes in the law, contributing to otherwise universal welfare.

First let them consider the state of the shipping interest. It was not disputed that that interest, owing to the repeal of the navigation laws, was at that moment subject to burdens to which it ought not to be liable, and which, even in the words of Lord John Russell, "impeded its prosperity." The grievances complained of by that body could thus be classed. There were the grievances as to vexatious taxation, under the head of light dues and passing tolls; the grievances as to the rules regulating the pilotage of the country; the Admiralty grievances under which an individual attached to the mercantile marine was enlisted in the royal navy; and the grievances relating to salvage and anchorage. The history of these complaints was a curious chapter in English social life. For instance, vessels had not only to pay dues for the advantage of lighthouses, but also for private lights; they were taxed to maintain the charities of a corporation; and they had to pay "passing tolls" to harbours into which they never entered.

Then there were the anomalies of pilotage. A Thames pilot could steer a ship to a Cinque port, but he could not steer it back; another pilot connected with another corporation performed the duty of returning. Thus the shipping interest having to employ two men to execute a duty which one man could discharge, the expense was proportionately increased, and the burden in many cases was found to be excessive. The license allowed to the merchant sailor was also curious. When a merchant ship found herself on a foreign station, it frequently happened that one of the crew without any ceremony quitted his captain without any notice, and often without any cause, and immediately enlisted in a ship belonging to the royal navy that happened to be on that station. Such right and privilege acted very injuriously upon the discipline and general conduct of the merchant shipping. The merchant sailor, in spite of his engagement with his captain, simply hoisted his red shirt, enlisted in the royal vessel that might be in the offing, and at once demanded his wages. Thus the captain of the merchantman not only lost one of his crew, but was called upon immediately to pay wages which otherwise would not have been due until the ship arrived in port.

Again, in the matters of anchorage and salvage, the royal navy pressed hardly upon the mercantile marine; a merchant vessel could be disturbed in her anchorage by the superior claim of a ship belonging to Her Majesty's navy; and as to the operation of the present system under which salvage was conducted, the mercantile marine was also very adversely affected by it. These grievances the government were prepared to redress. "We propose," said Mr. Disraeli, "to reduce the taxation which is paid by the shipping interest under the claim of supporting the lighthouses of the country—namely, the interest of debt which has been incurred, the contribution to charities and passing tolls to harbours which ships never enter. We propose to termi-

nate these three great sources of unjust taxation; and we believe we shall be able to effect this object by the annual sum of £100,000. The shipping interest will then have to pay only for the lighthouses which benefit them—which guide their ships and save their lives; and I am sure they will no more complain of a tax levied upon them for such objects and upon such principles, than any other class of the community will complain of the peculiar taxes to which they may be subject, but for which they gain in return peculiar advantages. We propose, in the second place, to submit to the consideration of a committee of the House of Commons the whole question of pilotage, in order that we may arrive at a result which I am sure will be impartial and satisfactory, as well as final. We propose that the three Admiralty grievances of which the shipping interest complain—anchorage, salvage, and enlistment—shall be entirely terminated, or, at least, subject to regulations which will deprive them of the injustice and injury which are so justly complained of."

The claims of the sugar-producing colonies next attracted his attention. "We must forget," Mr. Disraeli cautioned the House, "that sugar has been the battlefield of parties. We must form an opinion upon the condition of those colonies from the stern naked facts which may be placed before us, and not with any recollection of the past. We may deplore the legislation that is past; we may be of opinion, gentlemen on both sides, that the conduct of this country towards the sugar-producing colonies has been inconsistent and incoherent; that great unnecessary damage and devastation have been occasioned; that, as an interest, they have been treated in a wanton and indefensible manner: but what we have to decide to-night is, what in the present state of affairs we can justly do for them." He then laid before the committee the claims of the sugar-producing colonies for relief from England, compiled from a memorial presented by the West India

body. These claims, briefly summed up, were:—First, the arrest of the descent of the duties on foreign sugar; secondly, the reduction of the duty upon British plantation sugar; thirdly, a guarantee of additional loans for emigration and improvement; fourthly, the permission to refine bonded sugar; fifthly, the permission to use molasses in British breweries; and sixthly, the equalization of the duties on rum and British spirits. With regard to the first two demands, he proved from returns in his hands, that there was no valid claim for a differential duty, or for a diminution of the colonial duty. He found that the consumption of colonial sugar had greatly increased, and that foreign sugar had decreased. Therefore, clearly on the first two points the colonial sugar planters had no ground for complaint; their trade had extended, and they were not interfered with by foreign competition.

"I may be called traitor," said Mr. Disraeli, amid the cheers and laughter of his audience, "I may be called renegade; but I want to know whether there is any gentleman in this house, wherever he may sit, who would recommend a differential duty to prop up a prostrate industry which is actually commanding the metropolitan market, under the circumstances which I have placed before parliament? It is unnecessary to enter into any argument on the point. No person could think of proposing an increase of differential duties except for the attainment of a definite object. If that object be to give the command of the home market to our colonies, it is already attained." Then as to the request for additional loans to defray the expense of emigration and improvement, Mr. Disraeli stated that measures had been taken to send Chinese emigrants to the West Indies for labour; and as for the want of an additional loan, why, the sum of £500,000 already provided for the encouragement of emigration to their sugar-producing colonies had not yet been exhausted! He would not enter at present into the claims as to

the use of molasses in breweries, and the reduction of the duty on rum; but as to the petition of the West India body to refine their sugar in bond, the government would grant that request. There was less saccharine matter in colonial sugar than in foreign sugar, practically enhancing the duty on colonial sugar. The colonists asked to refine their sugar in bond for home consumption—that was, that the government should take the duty on the refined produce, and not upon the coarse or raw sugar. "Here," exclaimed the chancellor of the exchequer, "we have an opportunity of conceding to them a great boon, which is quite consistent with the principle of unrestricted competition. I announce on the part of the government, that we are prepared to concede this boon; we think it ought to be conceded, and we believe it will afford great relief, and also give a fresh impulse to the manufacture of colonial sugar."

He now came to that long-agitated question, the condition of the agricultural interest. That interest was of opinion that it suffered unduly from the burden of taxation, and he would now look into the subject for the information of the House. Local taxation resolved itself into three principal rates—the highway rate, the county rate, the poor rate—rates which the agricultural party declared pressed very severely upon them. As to the highway rate, six bills had already been brought into parliament with the view of establishing a better administration of that tax, and now a seventh bill was being prepared, which the government hoped would win the confidence of the House and the country, and have a beneficial effect, both administratively and financially, on the districts affected by the highway rate. With respect to the county rate, the tax was a slight one; any interference with it would lead to much disturbance in the general taxation of the country, and, therefore, he frankly avowed that he was not prepared to make any change, in that por-

tion at least, of their local taxation. He next had to consider that great rate, called the poor rate. He had always held, and still held, that the absolute incidence of all local taxation was perfectly indefensible in point of principle, therefore he had not altered his views upon this subject. It was, however, his duty to remember that a very great change had taken place in the burden of the poor rate; between the years 1848 and 1851 it had diminished nearly twenty-five per cent. That decrease materially influenced him in the course he was about to take. The amount expended for the relief and maintenance of the poor in 1851, instead of being over £6,000,000, as had been calculated, was really under £5,000,000.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Disraeli, commenting upon the vociferous applause with which this statement had been received by the Opposition, "I am afraid that is really not a cheer on account of the diminution of pauperism. I am afraid it is a cheer for recent legislation. Now I don't want to disturb 'recent legislation,' but your cheer is a very illogical one, and I must show you—what I should not otherwise have done, because I don't want to raise any controversy on the subject—that recent legislation may not have had anything to do with this result. Now you," said he, addressing the Opposition, "think 'recent legislation' is the cause of the poor rates in 1851 having been under £5,000,000, and upon that you cheered; but then it so happens that in 1846, before 'recent legislation' took place, the rates were rather less."

Mr. Bright—"With the same price of corn?"

"I think," continued Mr. Disraeli, "though I don't want to do it, I could produce some returns of the prices of corn which would show that diminished poor rates may co-exist with high prices of corn—one return, for instance, which, when I quoted it, the late Sir Robert Peel said ought never to have been printed; but there are greater

subjects for us to consider than the triumph of obsolete opinions [this remark made in Mr. Disraeli's best manner caused immense laughter amid the Opposition]. Yes, I look upon one-sided free trade as an obsolete opinion, just as you look upon Protection—obsolete because they are lost in the great principle of the day, that of unrestricted competition." Therefore, concluded Mr. Disraeli upon this subject, believing that the country was in a most prosperous state and that pauperism was on the decline, and taking also into consideration the measures he was about to introduce, he was not "prepared to recommend any change in the present system of raising the local taxation of the country."

Having discussed the position of these three interests—the shipping, the colonial, and agricultural—he now approached the more important topic of viewing the taxation of the country under the new circumstances in which all parties and conditions of men had agreed they were to be placed. "So long," he said, "as there were two great parties in this country who questioned the principle upon which our commercial code ought to be established, it was impossible to obtain any general adhesion to the principle upon which our financial policy ought to be constructed. So long as a man thought that his industry ought to be protected, he was prepared to endure a heavy burden of taxation artificially distributed. So long as a man thought that his industry should be free from all restriction, of course he demurred against the system which imposed restriction upon the financial arrangements of the country and raised the prices of the articles which he consumed. It is obvious, generally speaking, that the doctrine of unrestricted competition is not consistent with restricted industry—in a word, if you decree that the community are to receive low prices for their produce, your policy ought to be one which will put an end, as soon as possible, to high taxes. Well, sir, after the general election, and after the solemn verdict of the country, we

had to ask ourselves what were the measures which it was best to recommend to parliament—now that this principle was formally and definitely established, what were the measures most consistent with that principle, and which would enable the community to encounter that competition which it must now in every form, and in every sense, be prepared to meet?

"Well, sir, when we took that subject into consideration, giving it the utmost thought we could command, it appeared to us that we must arrive inevitably at this result—that we should best enable the people to engage in that competition to which they are now for ever destined, by cheapening as much as possible that which sustains their lives. We look, therefore, to articles that are of prime necessity; and if we find that those articles of prime necessity are subjected to some of the heaviest taxes in our tariff, then we say that these are arrangements inconsistent with the new system established and the new principle of which we have approved. It is the boast of hon. gentlemen opposite, that they have given cheap bread to the community; but the principles upon which you have given cheap bread to the community are principles which ought to make you cheapen the sustenance of the community in every form. The House, therefore, will not be astonished that Her Majesty's government are prepared to recommend parliament to deal with the malt tax. Here is a prime necessity of life subject to a very heavy tax, and a very high tax levied under circumstances which greatly restrict industry." He recommended that the duty—which produced more than five millions—should be diminished one half; and that there should be paid an uniform duty of 1s. 3½d. and 5 per cent. per bushel upon barley, bere, and bigg; abolishing the differential duty against the two latter, and also the drawback upon spirits made from corn in Scotland. He proposed that the alteration should take effect on the 10th of October next; a drawback being allowed to holders. At the

same time half the duty on hops would be remitted.

He turned now to another branch of the subject. He was about to deal with an article as popular with the people as malt, as much a necessary of life, and subjected to a much heavier tax. He alluded to the tea duties. "I hardly know," said the chancellor of the exchequer, "anything more diverting than to open Pepys' 'Diary,' where we see it stated, 'Took a cup of the new China drink—very pleasant;' and to remember that not two centuries have passed, and the exotic novelty which pleased one evening that fantastic gentleman is now the principal solace in every cottage in the kingdom." It had been said that, because tea was an article of limited production, therefore it was impossible that there could be any reduction in the price. He denied the statement. When he looked to the gradual increase in the importation of tea into this country—from 500,000 lbs. in the days of Mr. Pepys to over 70,000,000 lbs. a year at the present day, and to the vast resources of China so far as tea trees were concerned—he felt sure that there would never be any difficulty in the future in supplying England with tea. He proposed to reduce the present duty of 2s. 2½d. per pound to 1s. per pound; but that the reduction should take place during the term of six years, beginning with a reduction of 4½d. per pound the first year, and diminishing it to 2d. per pound each year, until the duty reached 1s. It was necessary to make the change gradual, since the increased supply would be gradual, as it took three or four years to make a tea tree. "I believe," said Mr. Disraeli, "that if you adopt that system you will very little injure the revenue; that you will gradually enable the people of this country to have a supply at a very reasonable rate of a very favourite beverage; and that you will do more than that—that you will give a great stimulus to the commerce, the shipping, and the manufactures of this country. For my own part I do not know any measure more

calculated to give a great stimulus to the commerce and shipping of the country than a measure dealing largely and extensively with the tea duties."

These reductions were of course recommended on the principle that the revenue of the country mainly depended upon the consuming power of the people. Of late alarmists had rumoured about, with considerable vehemence, that the consuming power of the people was rapidly diminishing. As chancellor of the exchequer it had become his duty to investigate that report. He met with no evidence to justify such a fear. It was true that emigration was actively going on; yet while 100,000 persons a year were quitting the country, the birth-rate proved that 200,000 were coming into it. Nor did he consider that emigration tended to diminish the consuming power. "Every emigrant from England," said Mr. Disraeli, "generally becomes an English colonist, and an English colonist becomes an English customer, and our markets are stimulated, our people are employed, and their wages are improved by the very circumstance which some regard as tending to our decay and desolation." The consuming power of a people did not depend upon their numbers, but upon their condition. It had also been apprehended that the rate of wages had increased so rapidly as to almost destroy the rate of profit. But they must also remember that, if wages had risen, the rate of interest was low, and the increase of gold had established credit in a manner which no political economist had ever imagined. He believed that if they only acted with tolerable prudence, with such advantages as they derived from a low rate of interest arising from natural causes, the country had before it an opportunity of material progress such as never occurred before to the vision of any statesman.

From the proposed remission of duty upon malt, hops, and tea, Mr. Disraeli calculated that there would be a loss to the revenue of between £3,000,000 and

£4,000,000. In addition to that loss the income tax, which yielded more than £5,000,000, was about to expire. It would become the duty of the House to consider what they would do with the income and property tax. His own views, which he had fully expressed upon a former occasion, he still maintained. He considered that direct taxation should be as general as indirect taxation, and that a measure of direct taxation founded upon a large scheme of exemption ought not to be tolerated. He proposed to continue the income tax, and to extend it to Ireland, but to acknowledge a difference between permanent and precarious incomes. Ireland had been treated as an exceptional case. Sir Robert Peel had exempted Ireland from the income tax on the ground that she contributed an equivalent in the form of other taxes—since repealed. It was impossible to be insensible of what Ireland had gone through; but she was not now without a ray of hope. Her poor-law expenditure had diminished from £1,320,000 in 1850 to £855,000 in 1852. Still he did not think it wise to treat the landed proprietors of Ireland with harshness, and say, "You shall pay your quota;" he did not think it expedient to throw any obstacle in the way of Ireland's regeneration: but he thought it his duty to extend the income tax to funded property and salaries in Ireland. There was another principle with regard to that tax to which ministers were prepared to assent, namely, the distinction between permanent and precarious incomes. It was not their intention to propose any increase in any of the schedules. They recommended that on all industrial incomes the point of exemption should be limited to £100 a year, and on incomes arising from property to £50 a year. They took the estimate of the profits of farmers not at one-half the rent, as heretofore, but at one-third; and the consequence would be, that with the reduction of duty the farmers would pay exactly one-half of what they paid under

the present rate. The total amount, including the modest sum of £60,000 for Ireland, he calculated at £5,421,000.

Mr. Disraeli next referred to the naval estimates, and in the remarks he made on this occasion we see how little sympathy he had with those niggardly economists and short-sighted manufacturers who objected to every farthing spent upon the defences of the country. He proposed to increase the naval estimates, not, however, with any reference to the question of peace or war. "It matters not," he said, "what may be the original cause; it matters not what dynasty may be upon the throne upon the other side of the channel; it does not turn upon what may have been said or done elsewhere—that the attention of the nation has been drawn to the state of the national defences. That attention was drawn originally by the highest military authority of the land. The effect of being so long in peace was brought to the consideration of the most industrious people in the world; it was drawn to their consideration while all the tendencies of the age seemed to secure tranquillity and happy repose. I say, that there was no panic or precipitation, but, on the contrary, a prejudice against what the people of this country supposed to be disturbing the dreams of repose and prosperity in which they indulged. But sooner or later the idea seized the public mind. It was taken more and more into consideration; and totally irrespective of external circumstances, the nation arrived at the conclusion that this country was not in that state of defence that is necessary and desirable. They arrived at the conviction that it was of primary importance that the shores of this country should be protected, and that its defences should be complete. If I were asked on the part of Her Majesty's government—in no other way would I presume to give an opinion—what I thought was the tendency of the present age and what the general course which present circumstances indicated, I should say, without

reserve and speaking from the bottom of my heart and in all sincerity, that I believe the predominant feeling of the present day is peace. But I believe the measures Her Majesty's government intend to recommend to parliament will tend to the preservation of peace.

"On considering the subject after the general election, we felt it to be our duty to lose no time in recommending the necessary measures. If it be a fact—and I assume that it is a fact—that this country is not properly defended, and that it wants to be properly defended; let due preparations, we say, be made for its defence. On considering the question we thought the best thing was to do it completely. We thought the best thing to do would be to put the navy of this country in the position in which we believe all Englishmen wish to see it; and the plans we have matured, and which, if the House will support our proposition, will be carried into complete effect, will be plans which will settle this question of our national defences for ever; that is to say, you will have all your arsenals and strong points in the kingdom defended, and you will have a real channel fleet, which can assemble from its different rendezvous at the moment necessary, and which is the proper garrison and protection of the country. It would have been more convenient for Her Majesty's government to defer the question—as they would have done if they had not felt it to be their paramount duty to bring it at once before the House of Commons. They were busied with measures the tendency of which, they believe, will be in due time to reduce the expenditure and the establishment of the country. But they felt it was totally impossible to mix up a question of this importance, and from its nature of this urgency, with questions of administrative reform. They felt that if the country were not properly defended, and if the people wished it to be properly defended, the question was one which ought at once to be completely and definitely settled. Sir,

we have taken those steps which we believe will insure the complete defence of this country. It will be necessary for me to ask for a supplementary estimate, so far as this year is concerned. I hope there will not be any difficulty raised on the part of the House. The state of the finances of the country, as I shall show in a few minutes, will perfectly authorize me in asking a supplementary grant for the current year, to be supplied from the ways and means; and next year we shall ask your approval of an estimate which will increase our general estimate about £600,000."

Mr. Disraeli then proceeded to give an account of the actual state of the finances, in order to show what would be the probable surplus at the end of the current financial year. After striking a balance between loss and profit, he said that he thought their surplus for the current year, taking the most prudent and the coldest calculation, would, instead of being £460,000, as estimated when he made his financial statement, be something between £1,300,000 or £1,400,000.

In these days, when retrenchment is so warmly advocated by a certain school in the House of Commons, and when commissions are being frequently organized to inquire into the condition of the permanent civil service of the country, Mr. Disraeli's observations upon administrative reform may be read with profit:—

"Sir, I mentioned that it was the hope and intention of Her Majesty's government, if they were permitted to follow the course they had chalked out for themselves, ultimately, but not precipitately, to effect no inconsiderable reduction in the expenditure of the country. This, I think, is a subject which has hardly yet been fairly dealt with. Hitherto we have considered that retrenchment, and not efficiency, was the parent of economy. A government has reduced estimates from the necessity of the moment, and there has been an apparent reduction in expenditure; but it has always been followed by a collapse, and generally the

unfortunate office of supplying the deficiency of an administration has fallen to their successors. One administration cuts down, another is obliged to increase; and so long as it is made a mere question of pounds, shillings, and pence, I am certain that no permanent and substantial reduction in the expenditure of the country can be obtained. I think it is the duty of an administration to look to the efficiency of the establishments of the country, and not to the rate at which they may be maintained. If you only make your establishments efficient, you will find almost, as a natural consequence, that you will save money; and, therefore, I take it to be efficiency, and not retrenchment, which is the true parent of economy.

"To effect reductions in the establishments of this country is about the most ungracious task in which an administration can embark. There is nothing easier in opposition than to call for retrenchment; there is nothing more difficult in administration than to comply with that demand. So long as you have your existing establishments founded on the same principles, and carried on in the same spirit, you will arrive at the same result. I do not mean to make any observation which shall seem at all to cast censure on those by whom the permanent civil service of this country is carried on, and to whom those engaged in the administration of affairs have been so much indebted; on the contrary, the other night I had occasion to offer my tribute to their invaluable services.* What they do they do in the best manner, but they are not responsible for the establishments of the country. It is our opinion that the system of administration is not as advanced as other great operations are in this country. Whether we look to our commerce, whether we look

* "I am the last man to refrain from doing justice to the permanent civil servants of this country. Their devotion to the public service is, I think, one of the most beautiful features of our social system. They have not public faine, but they have the appreciation of those whom they support and assist."—*House of Commons Free-trade debate, Mr. Disraeli, Nov. 23, 1852.*

to the other occupations of man, these have undergone more change with reference to the circumstances of the age, than the establishments by which the administration of the country is conducted. How are we to deal with these immense difficulties? If you attempt reform, you have to meet the two most formidable obstacles in the world—prejudice and skill. The person who presides over a great department does not like your interfering, and he has more knowledge than you have. What can be more difficult than to effect a reform under such circumstances? I have a great respect for the House of Commons, to which I owe everything; and there is no one who more highly esteems the labours of the committees than I do. If I wanted a committee on the state of India, for example, I do not know that I could find anywhere a body of men who could conduct such an investigation in a manner so satisfactory. You bring a large body of men round the table—skilled statesmen, eminently qualified for investigating political and financial subjects. You bring to bear on public questions the knowledge and experience of those best qualified to arrive at just conclusions, and of men of the world. But if the House of Commons, by means of a committee, were to examine into a great public department, you would not arrive at a similar satisfactory conclusion, as if the same men were investigating the affairs of India, or the operation of the Factory Act, or any subject of general interest, on which the information, intelligence, and temper of men of the world may be brought to bear. You have too many men, you have men of different political opinions; and the results have been always, that the inquiry has been fruitless. You have had committees of inquiry with respect to the army, navy, and ordnance. What have you done? Nothing. But I say this, if you want administrative reform, why not apply to your great offices the same principles as those which you apply to your revenue departments? Issue commissions, and make the government

responsible for the information they acquire, and make them act upon it. I assure the House that the government are sincere in their attempts to effect administrative reform. There is a question of great importance with reference to these reforms which has long been recommended to the attention of the House of Commons—that is, the bringing of the whole revenue of the country under the control of parliament. Well, we are prepared to recommend such a course; and when these financial measures are passed, I will take an opportunity of bringing the subject of administrative reform before the House, and of explaining the measures which Her Majesty's government are prepared to propose."

Mr. Disraeli now proceeded to explain to the House the ways and means by which he proposed to carry out the policy contemplated by the government. He intended to terminate the operations of the public works loan fund commission, and to carry the repayments of the advances to the revenue as part of the ways and means. He estimated the loss on malt for the year 1853-54 at £1,000,000; the loss on tea at £400,000; the extra estimates would be £600,000; and the light dues £100,000—thus making a total of £2,100,000. "And now," he said, "for the ways and means. First, as to the surplus revenue for the year 1853-54. I have shown to the House that we might take our surplus for this year probably at £1,300,000. I hope I shall never have to move another vote for the Caffre war. That came into our budget last year to the amount of £460,000. I think, however, it would be imprudent to take credit for the whole of that £460,000 in our future calculations, although our recent accounts from that quarter are of an extremely favourable character, and although, as far as the financial question is concerned in reference to the commissariat, I am very sanguine on the subject. Still it is not at all impossible that we may have to propose a financial vote for extras on account of

the Caffre war ; I should therefore say we ought to take off £200,000 on account of that charge. I take, therefore, the surplus for the year 1853-54 at about £1,600,000 ; I take the payments, if the House accedes to my proposition with regard to the public works fund being paid into the public treasury, at £400,000 ; that together will make about £2,000,000."

It then became his duty to propose to the House the means by which they were to increase the revenue of the country. He would not propose any addition to the customs duties—the repeal of those duties was a part of the system which they had recently adopted, and which he would not disturb ; nor would he propose any measure of indirect taxation. He was going to ask the House to consider the principles on which the existing house tax was constructed. Deprecating the hostility which had in former times been exhibited to that tax by the inhabitants of the metropolis, he proceeded to show that there had been reasons for the discontent formerly excited against the impost which now no longer existed.

"Remember," he said, "the inhabitants of the metropolis were subjected then to an enormous system of direct and indirect taxation. They were subject to direct taxation connected with their houses, to the extent of double the amount of the house tax—namely, the window tax ; and, in addition to all this, they were subject to that which they have subsequently told us was infinitely more grievous, infinitely more vexatious, and infinitely more injurious than all taxes—namely, the corn laws. Now, just let me remind the House of the real state of affairs as regards the house tax. Since that time—viz., in 1834—the duty on houses was repealed. It amounted, as a revenue, to £1,198,000. Since that time the duty on windows has been repealed, amounting to £1,950,000, making together £3,148,000 ; and since that time the duty on glass has been repealed, amounting to £800,000, £400,000

of which, according to the official return, was paid by houses for windows of crown glass. Since then, the duty on bricks, amounting to £465,000, and the duty on timber, amounting to more than £1,500,000, have been taken off ; and certainly I may say that one-fourth of the duty on timber was contributed by houses. Besides all this, nearly £15,000,000 of indirect taxation have been taken off, and besides all this, too, the corn laws have been repealed, which so many believed to have been a more grievous kind of taxation than all the other indirect taxation from which they had been relieved. Well, then, I need not say anything, at least to-night, with respect to the justice of the house tax. The greatest writers are agreed that no tax is more free from objection than the house tax. I need not say to-night to my predecessor (Sir Charles Wood), who is exhausted as well as myself—I need not say anything to him in favour of a house tax, for he has introduced one himself. But what I would venture to say is this, that I cannot believe that when I make a proposition which is only to reconstruct on juster principles—principles which have always been eulogised in this House—an imperfect law, as it at present exists, and that when I ask to be permitted to do that in order to carry measures which will advance the interests of the country, and animate in the most conspicuous manner all the great branches of industry in this country, I cannot think that I shall hear in the year 1854 those objections to a house tax which were heard in 1834. The house tax is a direct tax, and yet it is accompanied with exceptions which are quite indefensible. Who can justify a house tax of which the operation is limited to houses of £20 value ?" He proposed, therefore, that the basis of the tax should be extended to houses rated at not less than £10 a year. He would also increase the rate of the assessment. His proposal was that private houses should be rated at 1s. 6d. and shops at 1s. in the pound ;

the whole produce from which would be £1,723,000.

Having made that statement, Mr. Disraeli completed his estimate for 1853-54, which he had been obliged to interrupt for the purpose of introducing these details. He calculated the ways and means at £3,510,000, which would have to meet an expenditure of £3,087,000—thus leaving a balance of something less than £500,000; and that, he thought, represented a not unfavourable condition of finance.

"I have now endeavoured to place before the committee those measures of financial and administrative reform which the government are prepared at once to bring forward. The hon. member for Montrose (Mr. Hume) seemed surprised that no provision was announced with regard to the stamps on marine insurance and charter-parties. I would point out to my hon. friend that this is one of those financial matters which could not be considered as coming within the scope of this preliminary statement. The government has contented itself, on this occasion, with propounding those measures which it is prepared, by the sanction of the House, to bring into immediate operation. We have studiously abstained from offering any opinion on any branch of the system of taxation on which we are not prepared immediately to act. The measures which we have thus announced are essentially practical measures. If the House sanctions them, they will, in our opinion, lay down certain principles of finance which will lead to results highly beneficial to the people of this country, and be the foundation of other measures, which, we believe, will prove still more beneficial. It does not become us, according to our sense of duty, to offer anything to the House which is not of a practical nature, or to make any proposition which we are not prepared, with the sanction of the House, to carry immediately into effect. At the same time, we have not neglected carefully to examine the question of the stamp duties and the probate duties, and

we think it not impossible to bring forward, on the right occasion, a duty on succession that will reconcile contending interests, and will terminate the system of injustice now so much complained of. At present, however, we are not prepared with a measure of that kind, and we consider it, as I have said, altogether injudicious to propound any project to the House which we are not ready at once to act upon. I admit that what I have now proposed is only a first step, but I trust the committee will admit it to be a step in the right direction. We have met this great question in a large and comprehensive spirit, fully prepared, if the House will support us, to carry out the policy which I have tonight, most inadequately, I am aware, indicated to the committee—a policy which, we believe, will be for the welfare of the country, because it is a policy founded on sound principles of finance, and because it has no other object than to govern the country in the manner that shall most conduce to the happiness of the greatest number."

The speech occupied five hours in delivery, and numerous of its passages were loudly cheered. Mr. Disraeli's powers of lucid exposition, his grasp of the subject, and the practical character of the suggestions he raised, had now fully convinced the House that the chancellor of the exchequer was not only a wit, a genius, and an orator, but a sound business man. "It was well done," wrote Macaulay, "both as to manner and language. The statement was lucid, though much too long. I could have said the whole as clearly, or more clearly, in two hours; and Disraeli was up five. The plan was nothing but taking money out of the pockets of people in towns and putting it into the pockets of growers of malt. I greatly doubt whether he will be able to carry it, but he has raised his reputation for practical ability." "Without committing ourselves," commented the *Times* (December 4, 1852), "at once to every item in the long and weighty

catalogue of financial reforms now before us, we must say that the chancellor of the exchequer not only takes advantage of his position with the dexterity of a master, but has really succeeded in showing that a new position, new resources, and new capabilities are before us. He has done much to remove that almost oppressive feeling which for the last two or three years has been creeping over the energies of the country, that we had pretty well got to the end of our tether, and, like the Arctic discoverers, had carried our political inquiries to the last limits of utility and discretion."

At first the details of the budget, before reflection had developed into criticism, were cordially approved of. The recognition of the principle that a distinction existed for fiscal purposes between income derived from transitory sources and income which issued from real property was regarded as just and sound. The suggestion to place the customs and excise establishments under the control of parliament was looked upon as wise and beneficial. The reduction of the taxes on malt, hops, and tea, appeared a boon for which thousands would be grateful. The house duty, one of the fairest and least injurious of taxes, did not seem when proposed to excite any grave opposition. Mr. Disraeli sat down amid loud cheers, and from the temper of the House he was justified in entertaining the hope that his measures would be carried without creating greater hostility than usually attends upon the details of a budget. Shortly afterwards, however, sober second-thoughts began to make their influence felt upon the minds of members. Objections arose, and once set on foot they swelled in volume and force. The tea duties, it was urged, instead of being reduced gradually, should be reduced at once. The malt tax should be entirely repealed: to repeal but half of it was of very little benefit to the agricultural interest, and of none at all to the consuming classes. The exemptions to the payment of the income tax should be more numerous. Real property should be compelled to

pay probate and legacy duties. The extension of the house tax to benefit the farmer was warmly disapproved of. Such were a few of the hostile criticisms passed upon the recent financial statement, and it soon became evident that the chancellor of the exchequer would have to do battle to carry out his measure.

The first to open fire was the member for the University of Oxford. Already Mr. Gladstone had displayed the gifts and faults which have since characterized him — a sound judgment, marred by an impulsiveness which has often caused him to arrive at conclusions he afterwards felt himself bound to abandon; a splendid activity of temperament, marred by a feverish energy which has made him give the same consideration to petty details as to important matters, consequently much to the diminution of the force of his supervision; a magnificent eloquence, often marred by a verbosity which overwhelms his ideas in a flood of words; he possesses a great knowledge derived from books, but has no knowledge derived from men; he is a statesman with the prejudices of the theologian and the views of the bookworm; a man so wholly under the influences of the moment as to defeat all calculations as to what his next policy or his future opinions will be. Mr. Gladstone had entered parliament some few years before Mr. Disraeli. He had attached himself first to the Tory interest, and had subsequently thrown in his fortunes with Sir Robert Peel. After having served as a junior lord of the treasury, and an under-secretary for the colonies, he had accepted office in 1841 as vice-president of the board of trade and master of the mint. In this position it was his duty to defend the commercial policy of Sir Robert Peel; and the revision of the tariff in 1842 was almost entirely due to his industry and grasp of the principles of finance. He had presided over the board of trade, and had afterwards held the seals as secretary of state for the colonies. On Lord Derby succeeding to power, Mr. Glad-

stone refused to take office in the new administration, and contented himself with posing as one of the most trenchant critics of the government the Peelite party possessed. He had entered parliament through the Newcastle interest as representative for Newark; but in 1847 he had been returned as one of the members for the University of Oxford. Already there could be detected in his speeches, we will not say the malevolence, but that imperfect sympathy with which he has appeared throughout his life to be animated in all his political relations with Mr. Disraeli. The member for Bucks was always "the right hon. gentleman," never once, or on any occasion, "my right hon. friend, if he will permit me so to call him."

A few nights after the budget had been laid before the House, Mr. Gladstone rose to make his objection to the reconstruction of the income tax, as applied to Irish fund-holders. They had not, he said, been asked to decide upon a simple continuance of the income tax, but upon its reconstruction. And one of the chief features of this reconstruction was, that holders of the public funds were to pay income tax, contrary to the teaching of Mr. Pitt and to the Act of 1801. Mr. Pitt had declared that no distinct tax should be laid on the stockholder, although in levying a tax upon all income the stockholder was necessarily to pay his share. Mr. Pitt took no cognizance of the quality of income; his was a personal tax on individuals in respect to their income; whilst Mr. Disraeli's plan went direct to quality—to the source of the income, to its nature and permanence. It was no answer to say that Mr. Pitt's income tax had already broken faith with the public creditor; it had not done so. Those who lent the money perfectly understood that they were to be exempt from special taxes only. Mr. Disraeli easily refuted these illogical objections. He asserted that there would be no breach whatever of the agreement with the public creditor in the proposed reconstruction.

Mr. Pitt, in his speech, December 3, 1798,

had said, "I shall have no hesitation in submitting to the committee, that when a general assessment upon income is to take place, no distinction ought to be made as to the sources from which that income may arise. . . . Whenever an idea has been started of imposing upon the stockholders separately and distinctly any sort of tax, I have reprobated the attempt as utterly inconsistent with the good faith of public engagement. But the matter is materially reversed when a tax is to be levied on the income of every description of persons in the realm, when it is no longer in the power of the stockholder to say, 'I could avoid this tax by removing my property from the funds to landed security or to trade.' I should say to the stockholder, as one of the public, 'If you expect from the state the protection which is common to us all, you ought also to make the sacrifice which we are called upon to make. It is not peculiar to you; it does not belong to the quality of your income; but it is made general, and required from all.'" Had not Mr. Disraeli acted upon these suggestions? Stockholders had not been taxed 'separately and distinctly'; their property had only been taxed in the same ratio as other properties of a similar nature. An income from the funds was permanent and realized property; and when all permanent and realized property was taxed, why should the stockholder plead exemption? It was absurd to argue that he was entitled to any preferential claims. Admit his exemption, and what was to prevent the country gentleman selling out of land to avoid taxation, and investing in the funds? Mr. Disraeli concluded by saying that he did not wish his budget to be criticised piecemeal, but to obtain the verdict of the House upon the whole of his financial scheme. By that scheme as a whole the government were prepared to stand or fall.

On the 10th of December the conflict began in downright earnest. No one had enjoyed a greater experience in the art of tinkering up budgets than Sir Charles

Wood. Most of his budgets had been thrown upon his hands by committees, and he had passed the session in manipulating them according to the fancy of the House of Commons. It was therefore with no unpractised hand that he began to overhaul a financial statement which was not his own, and to expose all its flaws and weaknesses. He would, he said, comply with the invitation of the chancellor of the exchequer and discuss the budget as a whole; for although some portions of it might well be separated from others, yet most of it so hung together as to render it impossible to discuss one part without taking the rest into consideration. He was somewhat surprised to find the agricultural interest satisfied with the compensations offered them. "What benefit," he asked, "is it to them to have a repeal of half the malt tax, accompanied with an extension and increase of the house tax? What is the description of farms which is now most easily let at the best rents? Those on which barley is grown. What is the crop which pays best at this moment? Barley. What stock pays best now? That which is principally fed on barley-growing land, namely, sheep. If there be a description of land to which no boon is required, and for the burdens upon which no compensation can possibly be wanted, it is that land to which, if to any, a boon is given by the remission of a portion of the malt tax." He did not believe that a repeal of half the malt tax would benefit the agricultural interest at all. The importation of foreign malt would keep down the price of home-grown barley, and prevent that rise which those who advocated the repeal of the malt tax have always expected. He therefore considered that the reduction of the malt tax would give absolutely nothing to the agriculturist, whilst it would sacrifice an enormous amount of revenue. And he was of the same opinion as to the benefit supposed to accrue from taking off half the duty on hops. The county of Sussex and a small part of Kent, no doubt, desired the removal of the whole duty; but even if such a measure as that were adopted, the advantage to the English hop-grower would by no means be assured. Was it worth while dealing with the hop duty as the chancellor of the exchequer proposed to deal with it? There might be reason in taking off half the malt tax, since the half that remained was worth preserving; but was half the hop duty worth retaining? They would have all the excise restrictions and all the inconveniences, whilst the whole duty was but a trifle. Now, if there were a sound principle with regard to an excise duty it was this—do not maintain an excise duty unless it brings a considerable accession to the revenue. Therefore, suggested Sir Charles, either leave the duty alone or repeal it altogether.

He considered that there were other duties which might be far more advantageously repealed than those on malt and hops. It would no doubt, he said, be a remarkably agreeable thing to chancellors of the exchequer if they could do without revenue at all; but since that was impossible, all that they could do was to retain those taxes which were the least objectionable and the least expensive in their collection. Now it was admitted on all sides that the malt tax was the least objectionable of all taxes; the paying of it was less felt and less obnoxious than the paying of any other; whilst no tax was collected at so small an expense in proportion to the revenue derived. Why then reduce so innocent a tax, especially when such reduction would neither benefit the agricultural interest nor the consumer, but simply be of service to the maltster and the brewer? If taxes were to be reduced let the chancellor of the exchequer reduce the protective duty on timber, or the duties on butter and cheese, or the soap duties, or remove some of the inequalities of the assessed taxes. There were various duties which could be taken off with far more beneficial results to the community at large than the malt tax. He, however, approved of the proposition with regard to the tea duty, and of the mode in which it was pro-

posed to deal with it. Two years ago he himself contemplated a similar arrangement, only he thought the window duty under the then existing circumstances had a prior claim to the tea duty. With regard to the house tax he had never swerved from his opinion that it was a good one. He should not have proposed it, had he not thought so. He did not think there was any peculiar virtue in a limit of £20; he adopted that limit because he was proposing the house tax not for the first time, but as a commutation for the window duty, and he did not wish to extend the tax further than would be sufficient to include the houses which already paid the window duty. He did not oppose the extension of the house tax, though he entertained strong objections to extending it to houses of precisely £10. Nor was there, he considered, any occasion at the present moment to alter that tax.

"Indeed," said Sir Charles, "your increase of the house tax seems to me to be utterly needless and impossible. I am not at all averse to direct taxation within reasonable limits; but with regard to the house tax and all other direct taxes, if you wish to retain them at all, keep them light and popular in times of prosperity and peace, because they are your great resources in times of difficulty. Suppose a war were to arise, you cannot increase your indirect taxation, for that would be to add to the price of imported articles necessarily raised by the increased freight of war, the further burthen of heavier duties; but you must have recourse to direct taxation, and it is quite fair you should. It is fair and proper, for instance, that the housekeepers of this metropolis should be taxed for the defence of their homes; but if you double the tax now, when there is no pressure, I tell you that you will make the house tax so unpopular that it cannot be maintained. You are sacrificing one of the great resources of revenue which you ought to reserve for times of pressure; you are imperilling, by a needless and uncalled-for increase, that

very direct taxation which you are so anxious to maintain."

Sir Charles Wood then proceeded to examine the financial result of the budget. They were told that they were to have some wonderful financial phenomenon. "It was thought," continued the speaker, "that the right hon. gentleman, the chancellor of the exchequer, had some scheme by which everybody would be blessed with an abundance of money, which would put money into everybody's pocket, and take none from anybody; but now it seems that money will be taken out of many of our pockets, and that nothing will be put into those of other people. Now, I am disposed to bear my willing testimony to the eloquence and ability with which the right hon. gentleman introduced his financial scheme to the House; but what is the wonderfully new principle of finance which distinguishes the budget of the right hon. gentleman? It may be right, or it may be wrong; but where is the novelty? It is simply that which has been done before. The right hon. gentleman reduces indirect and increases direct taxation; but is there anything wonderfully new in that? I will not enter into any discussion of their respective merits. I will confine myself to the more practical view of the subject; and I say there is this fault, that with regard to indirect taxes, with one exception (tea), the taxes dealt with are ill-selected and ill-handled, and the right hon. gentleman deals with direct taxation so as to make it needlessly oppressive." He then criticised at length Mr. Disraeli's figures, and discovered that the surplus was really no surplus at all; since it was not income arising from taxation, but was obtained by applying to the ways and means of the year a sum of money, the repayment of loans for public works, which ought to be applied to the repayment of the debt caused by the creation of the loan. He also contended that Mr. Disraeli had miscalculated several of his receipts, and had consequently much

exaggerated the financial estimate for the ensuing year.

But the *bête noire* of the whole scheme was, in the eyes of Sir Charles, the new regulations as to the liability of income tax. He warmly objected to bringing the income tax down to £100 on incomes derived from professions, and to £50 on incomes received from property, to extending it to the funds and salaries in Ireland, and to making a distinction in the rate on different schedules. "Now, how often," cried the member for Halifax, "have we heard from those benches opposite that the income tax was justified only by the necessity of the circumstances under which it was imposed? How often have hon. members opposite urged that it ought to be a temporary tax—that it was imposed as a temporary tax—that it ought to be considered as such—and that the first surplus revenue should be devoted to reducing the income tax? And these are the men who, in a state of prosperity, with no financial difficulties except those which they create themselves, propose to extend to the poorer classes the taxes which they themselves consider so obnoxious!" How could they, he asked, defend the Irish part of their scheme, in which they taxed the fundholder in Ireland while they left the great landed proprietors untaxed? The Irish fundholder was to be taxed as well as the person who received a salary, while the great landed proprietor was untouched. Yet that was what they called justice! He deemed it most unwise to extend the income tax to Ireland. Ireland had sufficient burdens in her present state, and it was grievous and unjust to press her down with additional taxation. The imposition of a tax upon the Irish fundholder was a breach of faith. To tax funds paid in Ireland, and not to tax income derived from land in Ireland, were contrary to the provisions of the act as regards the fundholder.

Sir Charles Wood then concluded with a piece of advice which had often been tendered to him, and which it was now with a truly

vindictive pleasure he had the opportunity of offering to a rival. "I think," said he, addressing Mr. Disraeli in the most marked manner instead of the Speaker, "that your proposed mode of dealing with the taxation of the country is most visionary and most rash. No one in his senses would attempt, in one and the same year, to deal with £6,000,000 of the tea duties and £5,000,000 of the malt tax. No one would attempt, in one and the same year, to increase two direct taxes—the income tax and the house duty—and to bring under their operation so many persons who have hitherto been altogether exempted. I therefore advise the right hon. gentleman to take back his budget and re-examine it. Give us your reduction of the tea duties: you can do that without increasing our burdens. Give up altogether your house tax and the malt tax. Then you will have a budget which, as far as taxes go, may be supported. You need not," consolingly remarked Sir Charles, who was certainly an authority on the subject of humiliation or the contrary in this matter, "be ashamed to take back your budget. Mr. Pitt was compelled to do so. You need not be ashamed of doing what he did. Lord Liverpool's government was reduced to do that, and the right hon. gentleman cannot pretend that his government is as strong as Lord Liverpool's was. Take till after Christmas to consider what you will do, for I want you to re-construct your own budget. Take the advice of the right hon. gentleman the member for the University of Oxford, for it is obvious you have not considered the details of your budget. Either you know nothing about it, or you have recklessly abused the knowledge which you possess. My hon. friend the member for the North Riding (Mr. Cayley) talks of the consequences of rejecting this resolution. For my part I know of no consequences but an amended budget, and not a budget which, as it at present stands, imperils direct taxation, tampers with the credit, and tarnishes the good faith of the country."

In the course of the debate on the inhabited house duty, Mr. Gladstone criticised the conduct of the government in endeavouring to vote away taxes before the ways and means had been secured. It was contrary, he said, to the custom of the House of Commons. Taxation should not be remitted until the government were sure of the ways and means for the year; it was utterly opposed to parliamentary etiquette and all rule to call upon the House to settle the question of the house tax and to remit duties, until the House had recognized the principle of the property and income tax. This objection brought up Mr. Disraeli. "I am told," he said, "that I ought to take the course usually taken by the chancellor of the exchequer under the circumstances of bringing forward a financial statement. I want to know what parallel there is between the circumstances in which the present government is placed and the ordinary position of the chancellor of the exchequer in bringing forward his financial statement. Have we not been taunted from the beginning that we are avoiding bringing forward our measures? Have not the most vulgar insinuations—not heard, of course, in this House—been made that we are clinging to office if not to power, and evading that responsibility which attaches to every government of coming forward and vindicating the policy which we recommend? The policy which we recommend is a distinct policy. I said on Friday last that, with a view to assimilate our financial system to the new commercial system now universally acknowledged and established, I had, on the part of the government, to bring forward measures for this purpose; and now I am taunted and told I ought to have followed the miserable routine of commonplace circumstances. I feel persuaded that the course I have taken is right. I feel persuaded that we ought not to avoid a free and frank encounter on the policy we recommend. I have endeavoured to place that policy without reserve before the House. Nothing is farther from our desire

than to shrink from the decision of the House."

A special and peculiar knowledge is appreciated by nobody more than by the House of Commons. A member, no matter how uneducated or how halting and imperfect his delivery, who knows something which other men do not know, is always sure of an attentive hearing when imparting information on his own especial subject. During the debate on Mr. Disraeli's budget, many erroneous statements were made as to the influence of the reduction of the malt tax upon the brewing trade. It was, however, left for Mr. Lowe, who had but recently returned from the colonies with a high reputation for legislative ability, and who then represented Kidderminster, to stultify himself the most by the observations he offered upon a subject of which he not only knew nothing, but upon which he had not even the tact to conceal his ignorance. In the course of his remarks upon the malt tax he asserted that there was no monopoly "so close, so complete, and so circumscribed as that of the brewers;" that the brewing trade required an enormous capital to start with; that malt did not want keeping, and the fresher it was the better; that the brewers maintained the price of beer, and therefore any reduction in the tax would result in no benefit to the consuming classes; and that it was a mystery to him why the month of October was fixed upon for bringing into operation the half repeal of the malt tax. For these reasons the member for Kidderminster objected to the repeal of the malt tax, since it would "injure our revenue in a most vital point, and all merely for the sake of a few gentlemen for whom he had a deep respect, but who were certainly no great objects of compassion at present."

These fallacies were ably exposed by Mr. Bass, the member for Derby. There was, replied the eminent brewer, no monopoly at all in his trade. There was nothing to prevent Mr. Lowe himself from becoming a brewer to-morrow; and

as for the "enormous capital" spoken of by the member for Kidderminster to commence the brewing trade, he (Mr. Bass) knew of men holding their own successfully as brewers who possessed no capital beyond a thousand or two. "The fact was," said Mr. Bass, "there was no monopoly—all that was wanted were industry and superior skill in the application of large sums of money. Why, they might as well say that the right hon. gentleman opposite, the chancellor of the exchequer, had got a monopoly because he had more brains than any of them." Mr. Lowe, continued his critic, evidently did not understand either malting or brewing; and when that gentleman talked of brewing fresh beer with fresh malt, it was very evident that he was much better acquainted with other matters than with the brewing business. Mr. Disraeli, said Mr. Bass, had wisely deferred commencing the reduction of the malt duty till October; because if he had reduced it at once, he would have thrown the whole brewing trade into confusion. The malting season began about the first of October and ended about the first of May; and from the first of May to the first of October there was a general cessation in the process of malting. A brewer was obliged to begin brewing with a stock of malt amounting to very near one-third of his annual consumption; how could he do that unless he was allowed to have a stock of malt on hand? Therefore, brewing fresh beer with fresh malt, as suggested by Mr. Lowe, was impossible and altogether out of the question. He would advise the member for Kidderminster to get up his facts before he again addressed any audience upon the nature and the profits of the brewing trade. Mr. Bass, though a Liberal, then proceeded to state his opinion why he supported Mr. Disraeli in the reduction of the malt tax. He himself had proposed a similar reduction. He considered that a remission of half the tax upon malt would be most advantageous to the country, of considerable benefit to the producer of bar-

ley, of much advantage to the consumer of beer, and that it would entail very little loss ultimately to the revenue. It had been said, he remarked, that the reduction of the duty would all go into the pockets of the brewers—that over £2,000,000 would be distributed among them—and yet the brewers were to a man all against it! The reduction of the malt tax signified to the brewers more competition, since it would enable the trade to be carried on with smaller capital. It was absurd to say the consuming classes would not benefit. He estimated that, if half the duty on malt were repealed, there would be a reduction, according to the strength of the beer, of from four to six shillings a barrel. With regard to the bug-bear of foreign malt, Mr. Bass declared that he would undertake to say, that if the British manufacturers only had a fair chance—by that he meant if foreigners would reduce their duty—they would supply the foreign market with malt, instead of the foreign market supplying Great Britain. It was not every sort of malt that would produce a really valuable quality of beer; nor was the foreigner to be trusted to supply an article that would produce a desired quality of beer. He was of opinion that those members who had objected to the reduction of the malt tax had not made out their case.

Of the crowd of critics who rose up in condemnation of the course the chancellor of the exchequer had adopted, the most trenchant was perhaps Sir James Graham. He had one or two old scores to pay off against Mr. Disraeli, and the debate on the financial statement was an opportunity not to be lost. He was delighted, he said, to see that great measure at last brought before the House in a tangible shape, and in a manner which precluded the possibility of any evasion, on the one hand, or any exaggeration on the other. It had been observed that one government was very much like another, and so he must say that all budgets, whoever might be their progenitors, had a very great family resemblance.

blance the one to the other. He failed to see anything in the budget before them which was very remarkable, or which much distinguished it from other propositions of the like nature. Strip it of the repeal of half the malt tax, strip it of the repeal of half the hop duty, and of the question of the house tax, and it would appear to him a very common-place budget, a very acceptable budget, and one about which they would have very little dispute. But these matters had not been eliminated from the statement under discussion, and therefore he must deal with the budget as it then stood. He remembered Mr. Disraeli—it was true it was before the right hon. gentleman had assumed the responsibility of office—laying down the canons by which all chancellors of the exchequer should be controlled. The member for Bucks had said, “That which I would uphold as the golden rule for all chancellors of the exchequer is to beware that no tax whatever, whatever form it may take—whether it be a custom duty, an excise duty, or a direct tax which is imposed—should in its nature be excessive;” and then he had proceeded to say, “complete remission or complete commutation, these are the two principles upon which a finance minister should proceed.” “Complete remission or complete commutation,” cried Sir James; and now that Mr. Disraeli was a chancellor of the exchequer he began his work by violating his own rules, and remitting half the hop duty and half the malt tax! If they touched the hop duty let them repeal it absolutely; then they would get rid of the entire charge and vexation of collection, whilst the loss to the public revenue would be small. With regard to the malt tax he had invariably opposed its repeal, or any remission of the tax, and he saw no ground now why he should change his opinions. Such remission would not benefit the barley-growing districts, and the advantage to the consumer would be so infinitesimal—a farthing a pot—as not to be desirable. “Now,” said Sir James, “I am satisfied that

when any reduction in the price of an article by the remission of taxation, as affecting its retail consumption, is limited to an amount less than the coinage in current use, the advantage of that reduction is not appreciable.”

He was also opposed to the extinction of the public works loan commission. It was a legitimate and inexpensive fund, and of the greatest service to the landed interest. From its treasures money had been advanced to the land for the construction of canals, rivers, drainage, bridges, roads, railways, collieries, and mines. The fund had also assisted in the erection of lunatic asylums, gaols, and other buildings. Stop that fund and still a large proportion of those works would have to be continued, and fresh demands would arise. Those demands, he contended, must be met by great sacrifices on the part of the country gentlemen out of their own means, either immediately or by loans effected on terms not nearly so advantageous to them. Why should the chancellor of the exchequer lay violent hands upon that fund, in order to prevent a deficiency solely of his own creation by his tampering simultaneously with two great branches of the taxation of the country—the malt tax and the tea duty—yielding together an income of not less than one-fifth of the whole revenue of the kingdom? Nor did he approve of the extension of the house tax and the income tax, since it would press most severely upon the poor clerk and the struggling widow. The views of Mr. Disraeli upon the subject of direct taxation were incongruous, for he had laid it down at one time that direct taxation, with large exemptions, was confiscation; and at another, that without large exemptions it was impossible. Sir James instanced the manner in which the income tax as introduced into Ireland, and the increased house tax in England, conflicted with those maxims, and showed how unequally the proposed scheme of distinguishing between realized and precarious incomes would work in both countries.

Upon the question of the relative merits of indirect and direct taxation, he held that their admixture was the sound legislative policy ; but that admixture required great caution, and the proportions must be carefully regulated. With reference to that point he cited the opinions of Lord Derby and of Sir R. Peel, the latter of whom had declared that, except for a special and temporary purpose, direct taxation could not, in his opinion, be carried to a much greater extent than it had reached already. In conclusion, he repeated the advice of Sir Charles Wood, and urged the government not to press direct taxation far in a time of peace, but to have their machinery ready for such a system in case of emergency.

As the debate proceeded it became very evident that the details of the budget, the more they were criticised in committee, the more were they objected to by the leading members of the Opposition. Mr. Gladstone was especially indignant at the proposal to apply the money borrowed for the purpose of public works to the service of the year. "For the first time within my recollection," he said, "I think for the very first time, and perhaps for the first time within the recollection of men much older than myself, a budget has been presented to us on the part of the government, in which I presume to say it is not professed to provide for the service of the year one single farthing beyond what is absolutely necessary to meet that service. The right hon. the chancellor of the exchequer it is true, upon the figures he has submitted to the House, purports to show a surplus of £400,000 ; but that £400,000 which he will apply I say to the service of the year, it is simply and solely—and I think it is the first time I have known such a proposition to be made—it is simply and solely so much debt which it is proposed virtually to assign to that purpose. In former years it was found convenient to borrow money for the purpose of lending it out again for useful public works. The right hon. gentleman says it is necessary to

put an end to that system. The repayment of this money will come in this year at the rate of £400,000. On money borrowed for public works coming in, what ought to be done with it ? It is a question I am ashamed to ask. There is no man in this House who will not say at once, that money borrowed for the purpose of public works ought to be applied to the extinction of the debt by creating which it was obtained. But the right hon. gentleman applies it to the service of the year. By creating debt for the service of the year, he shows a surplus of £400,000."

Mr. Lowe, who was more familiar with financial topics than with the secrets of the brewing trade, held the same view as to this appropriation. "Let them," he said, "take a case by way of familiar illustration. Suppose that to-morrow a gentleman having a large quantity of land, a large family and no ready money—no impossible conjecture—had an opportunity of putting a son to great advantage in business, and in order to raise the necessary sum mortgaged a part of his estate for £5000, and that the son becoming prosperous sent continually instalments to his father of the money he had borrowed ; would the right hon. gentleman say that the owner of the land was acting as the father of a family, or as a man of common sense, if he took those instalments and spent them as he received them as part of his income, instead of doing his duty and carrying them to the current account against the mortgage on his land ? Well, that was the case of the exchequer loan commission."

Mr. Cobden took a somewhat anti-licensed victualler view of the repeal of the malt tax. Provided the necessary revenue could be produced without the malt tax he would advocate its total remission, but he would never be a party to imposing a substitute for the malt tax. He also objected to the manner in which the chancellor of the exchequer had put his case. Mr. Disraeli had said that beer, like bread, was a primary necessary of life and that it was indis-

pensable to the health and strength of the labourer. That statement was open to dispute. There was a large and influential body in the country, supported by some of the most eminent medical authorities of the day, who held that beer was not only not a necessity of life, but a very pernicious beverage to the individual. Therefore, whether an increase in the consumption of beer would increase the health and strength of the people of the country was at least an open question. The reduction on the malt tax was to be compensated by an extension of the house tax—an arrangement which was especially hard upon the abstainers from alcoholic drinks. "The teetotalers among my constituents would naturally say," added Mr. Cobden, "we don't want to be relieved from the malt tax; we have already repealed it so far as we are concerned; we are trying by tracts and lectures to induce our fellow-citizens to imitate us; and we think your budget unjust, and we won't have it." Had the chancellor of the exchequer put his proposition on any other ground—on the scientific ground that the malt tax was a nuisance to the trader and that it prevented the farmer giving desirable food to cattle—all the principles of political economy would have come to his aid, and they would be compelled to acquiesce in his project. Then the great apostle of free trade went on to protest against any attempt to infuse compensatory ingredients into the budget, and deprecated the revival of an antagonism between town and country. He denounced the addition to the house tax as unjust and partial, since it increased the existing disproportion of taxation upon houses and upon land. That tax, moreover, fell upon owners as well as occupiers. As to the modification of the income tax, he was bound to give the government credit for what they had done in that way; but here again an undue favour had been shown to the land. He then took a rapid glance at some of the vices of their system of collecting the indirect taxes, many of which,

he said, must be repealed, and the country make up its mind to a fair system of direct taxation. "In short," summed up Mr. Cobden, "the budget does not at all correspond to the magniloquent phrases in which it was introduced by the chancellor of the exchequer. It was not at all worthy of a five hours' speech. Indeed, I humbly conceive that I could have discharged the duty in about an hour and twenty-five minutes."

To the purely agricultural interest, the financial statement of the chancellor of the exchequer was to a certain extent disappointing. They had expected relief would be afforded them in the highway, county, and poor rates; but all they obtained was a reduction of the duties on malt and hops. Yet Mr. Disraeli, without creating invidious distinctions, could scarcely have benefited them more than he did. Whether, owing to free trade, or to the produce of the mines in California or Australia, or to the absence of competition from the extensive emigration then taking place, the misery and depression which had once hung over the fortunes of the agricultural interest had been removed. "You were formerly in a wretched condition," said Mr. Disraeli, "and I promised you relief; but you are now thriving, with cheap provisions and plenty of work—why then should you be specially benefited when you have no cause for complaint?" The representative of that class, the member for Cambridgeshire put their case very fairly before the House. "The chancellor of the exchequer," said Mr. Ball, "with equal justice and great fairness, had so framed his budget, that it bestowed upon all classes greater benefit than inconvenience; he should, therefore, most willingly give his vote to the passing of the whole scheme. He was prepared to take it as a whole, and as the best which, under the circumstances, he could get. He granted that he expected more; he granted, too, that he wished for more. He had come into that House as an advocate of Protection; but he soon saw he could not obtain that, and he was prepared,

therefore, to abide by the decision of the majority. If the population of the country were to turn round, perceive the errors into which they were led, and demand the restoration of Protection, he should be very glad to see the House once more revert to that principle; but so long as the opinion of the country remained what it was, he considered the question of Protection was terminated. And now, what did he ask them to do? They had annihilated Protection; now let the country have entire free trade. Let them abolish the duties on all manufactured articles—from metal, which now paid an import duty of ten per cent; let the duty on soap be struck off, and let entire free trade prevail. He had given over Protection; he meant now to be an honest free trader."

On the side of the government the speech of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton was among the best, and well deserved the encomium passed upon it by the chancellor of the exchequer, as one of the most masterly speeches he had ever listened to. Sir Edward asserted that if any philanthropist desired to confer some special boon upon the industrious classes, the reduction of the duties on malt and tea was precisely that which he would select; for the first articles to be chosen for reduction should be those affecting the physical sustenance of the people. The question was one which affected the whole population. They had cheap meat and cheap bread, then why not cheap tea and cheap beer? The reduction of the tea duties would augment English trade with China, and promote the interchange of goods. The reduction of the malt tax was a bold step in the right direction; for a diminution in that tax so far lessened the great financial difficulty of getting rid of it altogether. But because the question of the reduction of the malt tax was accompanied indirectly with benefit to the farmer, and was accompanied by a double house tax, they were told that it was a question of town against country. It was no such thing. It was a question of free trade against restriction.

"It is a question," said Sir Edward, "whether you will attempt to lower the price of an article of popular subsistence—whether you will remove a check which operates directly against an important branch of the industry of the country; and it is accompanied with a direct tax which would be fair and just, and as such is recommended by all political economists, even if it were not accompanied with any reduction of the malt tax at all. But I suspect that what deprives this reduction in the duty on malt of all merit in the eyes of hon. gentlemen opposite, is the very reason that should induce them to support it, namely, because it removes some weight from that class which has the most cause to dread competition. I fear that if the measure proposed inflicted some new hardships on the agriculturists, and gave to hon. gentlemen opposite a new triumph of class and party; and if all the agriculturists were, therefore, combined against them—we should hear of nothing but the selfishness of squires and farmers, who refused to cheapen the price of beer for the benefit of their poor countrymen." The Opposition objected, he continued, to the house tax being doubled for the benefit of the farmers; but that was simply to say that they objected to the further extension of free trade, when it operated against the other classes whom they represented. They could not object to the tax itself, because it was universally acknowledged, that of all possible taxes a house tax was one of the fairest, because it fell upon a man in proportion to his expenditure. The objection must, therefore, be either to the extension of the area, or to the duplication of the tax; and these objections he briefly discussed. Sir Edward then concluded by explaining the reasons which had prevailed upon him to detach himself from the Whig party and to give his support to Lord Derby, who, he observed, was not an advocate of any single class, but whose object was to mitigate the sufferings of all classes.

After an exhaustive and somewhat acri-

monious debate, which lasted four nights, the chancellor of the exchequer rose up to reply to the strictures of his opponents. Mr. Disraeli was never so happy, both in his tactics and his eloquence, as when fighting a losing cause. Like most men of his temperament, the certainty of success made him often careless and indifferent, and he was seldom seen at his best when commanding large majorities and mildly thwarted by a cowed Opposition. But to be hotly attacked, to be environed by foes, to feel his measures in jeopardy, to have arrayed against him a vast and venomous following—such a position roused all his energies, developed his resources, and gave a keener point to his satire. He was not combative; but when war was made upon him he never sued for peace, and was always prepared to meet hostilities fully in the spirit in which they were offered. On the occasion of this, his second budget, he had been lectured in the scolding tones of lofty superiority; not a little personal abuse had been introduced in the reproofs administered to him; and throughout the advice and the criticisms of the Opposition, spite and jealousy were plainly apparent.

"I must ask," said Mr. Walpole, in his elaborate defence of the financial policy of the government, "I must ask—and I would not have gone into the subject at all unless it had been for the disparaging tone which I think was somewhat improperly made use of—I must ask, Whence is it that these extraordinary attacks are made against my right hon. friend? What is the reason, what is the cause, that he is to be assailed at every point, when he has made two financial statements in one year, which have both met with the approbation of this House, and, I believe, also with the approbation of the country? Is it that you are jealous of his success? Is it because he has laboured hard and long, contending with genius against rank and power and the ablest statesmen, until he has attained the highest eminence which an honourable ambition

may ever aspire to—the leadership and guidance of the Commons of England? Is it because he has verified in himself the dignified description of a great philosophical poet of antiquity, portraying equally his past career and his present position—

*"Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate;
Nocteis atque dies niti prestante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri?"*

My right hon. friend has attained that position, and who will grudge it him? I will not speak disparagingly—God forbid I should!—of the right hon. gentleman the member for Halifax; his power and ability are admitted. But without disparaging him, I think I may say the budget of my right hon. friend may bear comparison with any of his. The best judges in all the country will declare, as I believe they have declared, that by his budget he has put himself on a level with the boldest and, at the same time, with the most prudent financiers whom the country has ever seen. They will tell you, at any rate, that in the greatest emporium of commerce in the globe these plans of his have reflected on him, in the judgment of those best capable of judging on the subject, the highest credit. They will tell you, as you have been reminded to-night, that he has disproved by his propositions the common fallacy which the world runs away with, that a man of genius cannot be essentially and practically a man of business. And whatever may be the result of this debate—whatever may be the fate of the present government—whatever may be the effect of that ill-assorted alliance which I see before me—the country will see, I firmly believe, that my right hon. friend has earned for himself a reputation as extensive as the empire for which he is so greatly legislating, and a gratitude as permanent as the honest generosity of a thankful, enlightened, and reflecting community.

Mr. Disraeli was, however, perfectly capable of taking care of himself. "Sir," he began, "after four nights of criticism, conducted by some of the most considerable reputations in this house, on the financial

propositions that I have laid on the table of the committee, I now rise to vindicate those propositions. If, in the observations which I will endeavour to condense as much as I can, I omit noticing any of the objections which have been urged against those propositions, I hope the committee will ascribe that negligence to inadvertence, and not to design. Having listened with the respect and attention naturally due to such words from such lips, I can conscientiously say that I have heard nothing that, in my opinion, has successfully impugned the policy which, as the organ of the government, I have recommended; and I am prepared to meet the objections which have been urged, and to show to the committee that they are unfounded and illusory." And first he would address himself to that sum of £400,000, which had so moved the ire of the Opposition, and which, under the name of repayments, he had recommended the committee to sanction and adopt as part of the ways and means of the impending year. That proposed course had been assailed in language and in a tone somewhat unusual—certainly not very parliamentary—by Sir Charles Wood, "for instead of addressing his observations to you, sir, he addressed throughout his speech his observations to myself."

There were two points, continued Mr. Disraeli, in this subject; first, Was he justified in recommending that the public works loan commission should be abolished? secondly, if he was justified in that recommendation, was he also justified in recommending that the repayments should take their place in the ways and means? Now what was this department? At the peace of 1815, owing to a surplus population, deficient capital, and numerous seamen and soldiers being disbanded, the labour market throughout the country was much disturbed. It became necessary for the government of the day to take some artificial means of employing that surplus labour, in a state of society where capital was deficient. A department was

therefore established which, by the credit of exchequer bills issued by the state, raised money, and employed that money in what was called "public works." That system continued for fifteen years, and then it was found necessary to terminate the issue. In 1842 an account was taken of the fund, when it appeared that about £3,000,000 had been raised by exchequer bills thus issued; that of that sum £2,000,000 had been paid off, and that about £1,000,000 remained unsettled. To close the transaction that £1,000,000 was funded. Since that date of 1842, it had been arranged that instead of exchequer bills, the public works commissioners should receive for the same purpose a sum of money to the amount of £360,000 a year from the consolidated fund. At the present moment the amount they had actually to deal with was £300,000; for, by a subsequent arrangement, £60,000 were transferred to the use of public works in Ireland.

They had heard, proceeded Mr. Disraeli, how advantageous was that fund to the landed interest for the erection of workhouses, bridges, prisons, and the like; but as a matter of fact it was not so, for the commission charged four or five per cent. on all loans, and country gentlemen found they could borrow money cheaper elsewhere. Therefore, in revising the public accounts as chancellor of the exchequer, he saw a department of no great mark and possessing a large balance sheet, which was lying perfectly idle; for the causes which had called the commission into existence now no longer operated. What was he to do with that unproductive balance of the public money? Sir Charles Wood had said, "We all know how convenient it may be to the minister to have at a particular moment such a fund at his command." It had certainly been convenient; and though he, Mr. Disraeli, had been too short a time at the exchequer to experience any of its advantages, he would show how his predecessors had availed themselves of such opportunities—how the minister of the day

had possessed himself of this public fund, virtually without the cognizance of parliament, and how sums had been squandered which had escaped the vigilance of even Mr. Hume. A sum of nearly £300,000 had been lent to those ingenious persons who resolved to make a tunnel under the Thames, of which not a shilling had been repaid. Battersea Park, one of the most absurd speculations that man had ever engaged in, had received an advance of £150,000. He had before him a list of parallel profitless advances; between the years 1824 and 1850 nearly £700,000 had been lent—not, as Sir James Graham had alleged, to country gentlemen—every shilling of which had been lost to the nation. And these sums were advanced without the House being taken into the confidence of the loan fund—without a single member being cognizant of the fact! “I think the committee will agree,” said Mr. Disraeli, “whatever they may think of the further merit of the question, that in stopping a system so iniquitous, I was only doing my duty as a guardian of the public purse.”

The question now arose, what were the government to do with the repayments to that fund, which would every year come in when the issue was stayed, and which repayments he had estimated at £400,000? Were they to carry these repayments to the balance of the exchequer? “It is no doubt,” said Mr. Disraeli, “of the utmost importance that the balance in the exchequer should be high. That is a very great principle. But after all, the balances in the exchequer are nothing more than the balances of the nation with its banker; and the same rule must apply to a nation with its banker as to a private individual with his banker. Whether you bank with Messrs. Drummond or with the Bank of England, neither would allow you any interest on your balances. It is necessary, therefore, for the nation, as for a private individual, to have a good, ample, and sufficient balance; but it is inexpedient, it is unwise, to have an excessive balance.”

To pay these repayments into the balances of the exchequer would have been the same as locking them up in an iron chest—it would have been unprofitable. He hoped the House would not consider him presumptuous in instructing them in these matters. His own knowledge on the subject was of course recent. “I was not,” he laughed, “born and bred a chancellor of the exchequer. I am one of the parliamentary rabble; but I trust, after all the observations that have been made, I may be permitted to show that. I have not neglected to render myself acquainted with these affairs.” He then explained how he intended to devote these repayments to the payment of the debt created in 1842 by funding loan exchequer bills. He expounded the manner in which he had made the £400,000 act upon the reduction of the public debt, contending that the course he pursued had been in conformity with the obligations of the law, as well as with the recommendations of parliamentary committees.

Mr. Disraeli then proceeded to justify his estimate as to the result of repealing half the malt tax, which had been called in question, and his having deferred the actual repeal of the duty until October. This last point gave him an opportunity of alluding to Mr. Lowe. “But why fix October?” cried Mr. Lowe; “here is a plot: if we can only find out why the government fix upon October we shall be able at once to penetrate these financial mystifications.” “The hon. and learned member for Kidderminster,” said Mr. Disraeli, “is an accession to our debates. He has shown, on the rare occasions on which he has addressed the House, considerable information; but there certainly is one subject on which his knowledge has been most conspicuous, and that is—brewing. I am surprised that an hon. gentleman who seemed so complete a master of that art, and who made so eloquent a defence of the system of credit to maltsters, should of all men be the person to ask why we fixed upon October for





